

# Catholic Caregivers

*'Caregiving is pro-life!'*

## Choosing the Best Solution

It's not unusual for a family caregiver to discover that an unexpected problem is the number of possible solutions.

After looking carefully at your care-receiver's needs and the various ways to meet those needs, it may become clear there is no single right choice. There may be many choices, each with merit.

So which is best for him or for her? How can you be sure you and your loved one are making the right decision?

The following are basic principles used when assisting someone who needs care. It can help a family to consider each when trying to reach a decision.

- You're dealing with a whole person, not simply one or two particular problems. It doesn't mean your loved one is doing well just because he or she has a safe place to live and is eating all right.

For example, what about that her health in general? Is she getting the proper care?

What about his need to get out and socialize? Does he have the opportunity to be a part of the community?

What about her spiritual needs? Can she get to Mass? Does she still feel as if she's part of the parish?

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- A care-receiver maintains the right to be treated with dignity and respect. A solution shouldn't humiliate or embarrass your loved one. His or her privacy should continue to be respected.

- Each care-receiver is an individual. Avoid any "cookie-cutter" approaches. Just because one particular choice worked best for your neighbor's family doesn't automatically mean the same will be best for yours. Just because one solution was the best fit five years ago doesn't automatically make it right for today.

It's so easy for a family to fall into the trap of thinking, "This is how we did it with Grandma, so this must be how we need to do it with Mom."

Yes, it *may* still be the best way but, then again, it may not.

To use another comparison, the best-fitting solutions, like the best-fitting suits, are tailor-made, not bought off the rack or hand-me-downs.

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*It's important your loved one is involved in the decision making and that means keeping him or her in the loop when information is being gathered.*

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- It's important your loved one is involved in the decision making and that means keeping him or her in the loop when information is being gathered. He or she should participate in the entire process.

It also means there are no secrets. (For example, it is not uncommon for a family to want to hide or disguise the cost of a particular service such as home care because "Dad won't like it.") Invariably, keeping secrets, withholding information, or telling little white lies backfires.

- Closely related to participating in decision making is self-determination. This means that, even if you *strongly* disagree with your loved one, she maintains the right to make her own decisions.

There are exceptions when intervention is necessary, such as significant dementia or attempted suicide, but remember the exceptions are rare, not the norm. Just because you don't like your loved one's choice doesn't mean he or she no longer has the right to make that choice.

Perhaps no solution will perfectly match all the principles, but often the best choice for your loved one – for your parent, spouse, child, other family member or friend -- is the one that comes closest. □

Promoting Care for the Caregiver!  
--Spirituality, information and resources for individual caregivers: [YourAgingParent.com](http://YourAgingParent.com)  
--Training and educational material for dioceses and parishes: [CatholicCaregivers.com](http://CatholicCaregivers.com)  
--A membership association offering spiritual support for those who need care, give care, or assist others giving care: [Friends of St. John the Caregiver: FSJC.org](http://Friends of St. John the Caregiver: FSJC.org)  
>P.O Box 320, Mountlake Terrace, WA 98043<