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LIGHTHOUSE

Information & Support

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## CARING FOR THE ELDERLY

Ageing is an irreversible and inevitable process, and many people find it difficult to cope with its inevitability. For some, it is natural that the responsibility of caring for aging parents falls on their shoulders. This is an extremely difficult task that requires appropriate knowledge and preparation.

### UNDERSTANDING OLD AGE

Understanding what senior age entails can help you find inner reserves of patience and forbearance for an elderly person. Changes associated with ageing include:

- Decrease in the efficiency of cognitive processes: concentration, attention, memory, learning new things, pace of performing tasks.
- Development of diseases, deterioration of senses, loss of appetite.
- Dementia – such as Alzheimer's disease – that does not impair consciousness but orientation, thinking, understanding, language functions, learning ability.
- Mental disorders – in senior age, depression is most often associated with weakness, increasing discouragement and loss of interest.
- Changes in personality and behaviour: older people can become kind, gentle or selfish and grumpy. Aggressive behaviour, even towards carers, is a big problem. It can be caused by disease, progressive ageing of the brain or damage to the brain.
- Social changes: retirement, inactivity, loss of social contacts, feeling of loneliness.
- Reorganising existing priorities, coping with the inevitability of one's own death and that of loved ones, grief after the loss of important people.

All these changes affect the senior's well-being. They can cause anxiety, fear of infirmity and loss of independence, as well as irritability, pessimism, resignation.

### WHAT HELPS SENIORS?

Some older people develop their own way of coping with the progressive ageing process and the emotions that accompany it. Such strategies may include:

- Feeling satisfied with retirement and being able to support the loved ones, e.g. in caring for grandchildren.
- Deepening bonds with other people, making new friends, attending courses for seniors.
- Turning to religion – older people are more likely than younger people to turn to God for strength and support in overcoming difficulties.
- Sharing experiences with others who are struggling with similar issues.
- Correction of medical conditions, e.g. by prosthetic limbs, hearing aids, corrective glasses.



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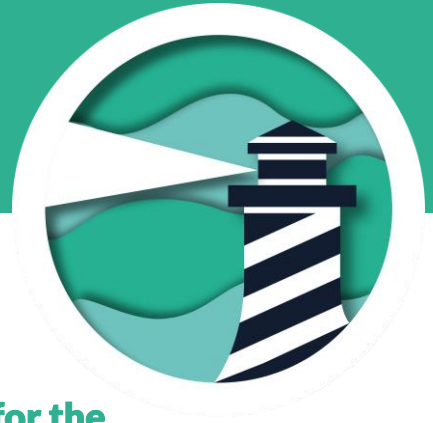


EAP HELPLINE

### EAP WEBINARS

1. Log on to our portal:  
[www.myeap24.pl](http://www.myeap24.pl)
2. Browse through our upcoming webinars and sign up  
*Inspire yourself to change for good*





**If you are taking care of an elderly person, take a look at *Poradnik opiekuna seniora [Guidebook for the Carers of Seniors]* by K. Owczarek and M. A. Łazarewicz.**

#### HOW TO TAKE CARE OF ELDERLY PARENTS?

When providing care for elderly parents, the following tips are worth considering:

1. **Assess your parents' needs.** Identify what areas they need help with and prioritise them. Consider whether they need support with transport, shopping, finances, cooking etc.
2. **Identify the extent to which you can help.** Consider the distance you have to travel, your own work and home responsibilities, your level of patience, willingness and determination, as well as your finances and your own health problems.
3. **Involve your parents in the process.** Do not force them to do anything unless it is for their safety. Explain that you are only trying to help and let them be as independent as they can be.
4. **Take finances into account.** Determine if you will need financial assistance to provide medical or other care for your parents. Check government programmes and other potential resources.
5. **Make sure their home is safe.** Check for potential hazards or areas for improvement. Clean up the mess, secure dangerous areas, provide adequate lighting, install handles or rearrange objects to make them easier to reach.
6. **Facilitate communication.** Make sure that your parents have easy access to communication and can contact others when they need or want to.
7. **Check out the support options available.** Find out what options you have to help with care for a sick person, such as hiring a professional carer.

#### HOW TO TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF AS A CARER?

1. **Join a support group.** Talking to other people in a similar situation can be comforting, and it can be a source of ideas on how to deal with certain situations.
2. **Ask others for help.** Seek help from other family members or professionals who can take over some tasks from you.
3. **Set boundaries.** Set aside some time for yourself away from your parents to take care of your physical and mental needs.
4. **Learn to prioritise your responsibilities.** When the number of tasks becomes overwhelming, good organisation will help you manage your time better and plan your day more effectively.
5. **Look for resources and ideas.** There are many books and articles on how to cope with caring for an ageing parent, use them.

We are often the only ones who can provide the support needed. However, taking care of ourselves when we care for others is extremely important. This will benefit everyone!

*Don't wait, call now! If you feel that you are overwhelmed by caring for older people, contact professionals.  
We are here to support you!*