



CAREGIVERS

VOLUNTEERS ASSISTING THE ELDERLY

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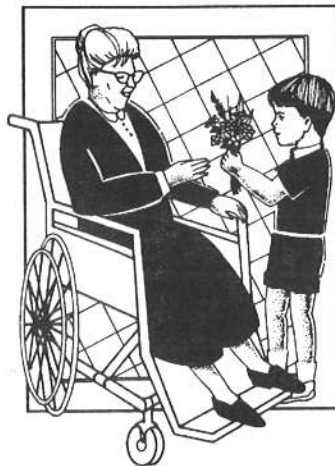
Adapting Your Home for Greater Independence

by Jack Collings
Dunbar/Collings Architecture

Independence and the ability to perform our day-to-day tasks can be crucial to our personal happiness as we age. The design of our homes and appliances should enhance our ability to perform these tasks.

Over the past several decades, our homes and appliances have been typically designed to accommodate the abilities of a healthy, 30-year-old male. This has resulted in creating environments that often force individuals to leave their homes as they age. This can be a major step in the loss of independence.

The good news is that there is now a major effort, nationally, to implement "home modification" programs. These programs are designed to make simple affordable changes that increase our ability to remain in our homes in



comfort. These changes can range from the simple replacement of round door knobs and plumbing knobs with lever handles (arthritis sufferers, take note!), increased lighting, installation of attractive grab bars and ramps, to the more complex addition of first-floor

bathrooms and bedroom areas.

In addition, there are a tremendous number of products available that can supplement our abilities, including easy grip utensils and knives, gardening tools, kitchen devices, and laundry appliances. These are available from a variety of stores and mail order catalogs.

In a remodel or design of a new home, keep in mind that planning for our senior years can create a universally-designed home that is both attractive, functional, and assists us in remaining independent.

AARP is a terrific resource for home modification information. It publishes an excellent primer entitled *The Do-Able Renewable Home*. Available from AARP Publications, 601 E Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20049.

Communication Between Men and Women

by Laine Waggoner, M.A.

We've been hearing a lot lately about the playful notion that men and women are from two different planets - ever since John Gray very cleverly coined the phrase: "men are from Mars and women are from Venus."

Personally, I think this idea might be damaging to relationships. Whatever real differences there might be between men and women, we all need to improve our communication with one another in order to establish and maintain harmonious relationships.

Gray may owe some of his ideas on gender differences in communication to the earlier writings of Deborah Tannen,

Ph.D., a well-respected linguistics researcher at Georgetown University in Washington, DC.

In her books, "That's Not What I Meant!" and "You Just Don't Understand," Tannen asserts that "a man and a woman can interpret the same conversation differently, even when there is no apparent misunderstanding."

Differences in communication styles, she believes, mean that both women and men need to make adjustments "in order to avoid senseless misunderstandings."

She maintains a cross-cultural approach to communication, because boys and girls, even from the same family, actually grow up within different cultural settings.

Each sex learns different styles of communication from parents, teachers and others. These differences can be seen among children as young as preschool age.

Men learn to approach life "as a contest, a struggle to preserve independence and avoid failure." They frequently see other people as adversaries. Men preserve status by telling others what to do. To men, independence means "we're separate and different."

The woman's approach is almost the exact opposite. Women tend to see themselves as individuals in a *network of connections* where "conversations are negotiations for closeness in

Continued on page 2

which people try to seek and give confirmation and support, and to reach consensus." For women, life is a struggle "to preserve intimacy and avoid isolation." Intimacy implies that "we're close and the same."

These are the differences that give women and men very differing views of the same situation.

I am particularly interested in the way men's and women's differing world-views and conversational styles influence how they react to and talk about depression and other emotional problems.

Women like to talk about their feelings to preserve intimacy and to avoid isolation, while men will do anything to preserve independence and avoid the appearance of failure. Generally-speaking, women will more readily report being depressed and talk about it, while men try to be strong and silent and tend to mask depression with drugs, alcohol, workaholicism and emotional withdrawal.

Men tend to cope with difficulties from a problem-solving posture: making suggestions, giving advice and seeking solutions. Women cope by empathizing and doing more listening than suggesting.

Thus, when people are depressed, they naturally seek the kind of support they would normally give. Men will more readily accept concrete advice, if they ask for it, but not sympathy, which makes them feel weak. On the other hand, women want a warm and empathetic listener, not someone to offer suggestions or solutions.

Following are some valuable communication suggestions from Drs. Levine and Amador in their 1996 book, "When Someone You Love is Depressed."

If a woman is depressed:

When communicating with a woman who is suffering from depression (or another emotional problem), we need to shift from trying to solve her problems, to concentrating on understanding them. Try telling her, "I can see why you feel that way."

Show curiosity about her experiences and ask if she has any theories about her depression. Sympathize with her pain. Repeat back what you hear and ask if she thinks you understood her. In order to feel close and connected, she needs to hear that you also know how depression or sadness feels.



Don't tell her how you solved your problem or offer advice or suggestions right away. This makes her feel as though she's not being heard. Only offer concrete help if she asks for it.

If a man is depressed:

When communicating with a depressed man, Drs. Levine and Amador tell us not to expect him to talk readily or easily about his problem and don't ask him a lot of questions. Try saying something like, "I'm concerned about

you - but don't want you to feel any pressure to talk about what's bothering you. I'm here to listen if you need me."

"Don't baby him," the doctors warn. Be sensitive to his ego and his need to feel self-sufficient. Try telling him, "I know how hard it is for you not to be able to do everything you usually do. If there's anything I can do, let me know."

Because of his upbringing in the "male culture," he may have difficulty finding the words to express his feelings. Try giving him multiple choices to describe how he feels: "Are you feeling angry, sad or worried right now?"

If he is ready, he might grab at the chance to discuss it with you.

Don't come on too strong with men. It would be better to attempt to do some joint problem-solving. Try to discuss his ideas—the pros and the cons—on ways to reach his goals.

Many men resent anyone telling them what to do. If the advice comes from a woman, some interpret it as nagging. If it comes from another man, it can be seen as an attempt to get "one-up" on him.

For both sexes, it is important to talk about the communication process and keep an open

dialogue, using humor and patience. Success depends on *how* things are done and said.

Old patterns of communicating are not easy to break. But, relationships *can* change and grow with honesty, directness, empathy and practice.

A client writes:

"This program is greater than any help I have ever received from professionals."

Executive Director's Message



Pat Meredith, Executive Director

CCAREGIVERS is grateful to have received three foundation grants this past fall. These gifts do so much to strengthen our program.

The Swift Memorial Health Care Foundation gave \$4,700 to fund our Santa Paula office. The Swift Foundation, which assists health care agencies in Ventura County, has supported our program since 1986.

The Wood-Claeyssens Foundation, based in Santa Barbara, gave \$5,000. It has provided assistance to CAREGIVERS since 1995.

The Martin V. and Martha K. Smith Foundation of Ventura County has assisted CAREGIVERS since 1995 and this year made a gift of \$1,000.

We sincerely appreciate the confidence in our program that these gifts represent.

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A client writes:

"This program is a life saver for me. I would be lost without my caregiver. She is so special!"

Board Chairman Norm Weitzel and Executive Director Pat Meredith presented Oscar Esmaili of the Royal Bakery and Cafe with a plaque in recognition of his generous donation of decorated cakes. Oscar has provided the cakes for our Volunteer Recognition Dinner for the past 7 years.



YOUR DONATIONS MAKE IT POSSIBLE FOR US TO GIVE A HELPING HAND TO THOSE WHO NEED IT. THANK YOU! (October – December, 1997)

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We are able to provide this vital help to the frail elderly in Ventura County only because of the generosity of people like you. Contributions, gifts to our Endowment Fund, memorial gifts, and gifts in honor of a special person or occasion may be sent to our Ventura office, and every gift will be promptly acknowledged. All donations are tax-deductible. Please make checks payable to CAREGIVERS. Call us at 652-0566 for more information.

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In Grateful Remembrance of
Esther Brann Schorr, July 21,
1899—January 3, 1998.

Volunteers — These folks need your help!

- Three men, ages 63, 85, and 93, are waiting for a visitor.
- Two blind women need someone to read their mail and perhaps a magazine or book now and then.
- Two women, ages 83 and 76, who live together were in an accident. They need help with grocery shopping.
- A lonely 93-year-old woman needs companionship and help with shopping.

Call Carol at 652-0566 to find out about volunteer opportunities with CAREGIVERS. We need you!

CAREGIVER Spotlight

on Gloria Seter

by Carol Basralian

Gloria Seter of Ventura, who had been a volunteer for the city-run Phone Pals, joined CAREGIVERS in 1995, looking for “something more personal and challenging” to do. We immediately matched her with Sally Armand, who had learned about us from her doctor.

Sally was recovering from the first of her three strokes. Before then she had enjoyed dancing, bowling, sewing and she was past president of the Emblem Club. With her activities severely curtailed, Sally was depressed and needed a special friend.

“We really look forward to Gloria’s coming,” said Donnell, Sally’s husband of 50 years, about the women’s friendship. “I can take care of the house and shop for groceries, but I can’t give Sally the camaraderie of a girlfriend. Gloria is our treasure!” A beaming Sally adds, “We talk and talk and tell each other jokes. We have a real rapport.”

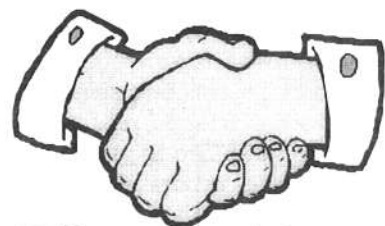


Gloria Seter (l) and Sally Armand (r)

Gloria gets a lot of satisfaction from the relationship, as well. “We get together once or twice a week, and we laugh and laugh. It’s good for both of us.” In addition to visiting and socializing, the two friends go clothes shopping and have lunch out, giving Donnell the respite time he needs.

As I watch Gloria and Sally teasing and chattering, I am warmed by the knowledge that our program has, again, been successful in bringing some very special people together and making them happy.

Special Thanks to Special People



There is a special place in Heaven reserved for our “emergency drivers” who selflessly give many hours to transport our elders. Otherwise, they would have no way to get to doctors’ offices, grocery stores and hospitals.

Thank you: Wiggy Battaglia, Jerry and Barbara Connors, Lu Chovan, Diana Dominguez, Martha Dugan, David Kogel, Pat Ogg, Jerry Thomas, Geri Yokum, Mary Yoshioka.

For Your Information

The National Eye Care Project (NECP) is a nationwide outreach program designed to provide medical eye care to disadvantaged senior citizens. To be eligible for help, the individual must be 65 or older, in financial need, a U.S. citizen or legal resident, and *not currently* under the care of an ophthalmologist. Volunteer physicians agree to provide services at no out-of-pocket cost to patients referred through the NECP, including an initial eye exam and care for any conditions diagnosed at the initial visit. Other professional fees and eyeglasses are not covered. To find out if you are eligible for the program, call 1-800-222-3937.

CAREGIVERS

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CAREGIVERS' MISSION - To provide a reliable personal relationship between one volunteer and one elder in need of assistance. Without the kind of services we offer, frail elders may find themselves living in unfamiliar, impersonal institutions, with a debilitating sense of having lost both independence and dignity. By matching volunteers with elders who need assistance, CAREGIVERS permits many of them to remain in the familiar and cherished surroundings of their own homes.

CAREGIVERS, an interfaith effort, is sponsored by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet and is grateful for the financial assistance of Trinity Lutheran Church, Ventura; First United Methodist Church, Ventura; Ventura County Church of Religious Science, Ventura; Sisters of the Holy Cross; National Council of Jewish Women; First United Methodist Women; and St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Santa Paula.

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