

*Free resources help families overcome resistance of seniors who need help.*

Just when you thought that a family caregiver's job couldn't get more difficult, consider this: Many of the estimated 11,500 households caring for a senior in the North Platte area are trying to help an aging relative who'd rather not have help.

A study of family caregivers who responded to a survey on [caregiverstress.com](http://caregiverstress.com) revealed that more than half of the respondents (51 percent) said that their aging relative was very resistant to care. These seniors often object to help whether it's from their own children or a professional who tries to come into their homes to assist.

"This is a real problem for family caregivers worried about the safety of a senior loved one who might be forgetting food on the stove or neglecting to take their medications," said Mary Jo Chatelain owner of the Home Instead Senior Care® office serving 13 counties in southwestern Nebraska.

But experts say that keeping fiercely independent seniors safe at home isn't a lost cause; there are solutions for them and their family caregivers. That's why the Home Instead Senior Care network is launching Caring for Your Parents: Education for the Family Caregiver.

The unique, educational program includes a number of resources that address senior resistance to care as well as a variety of other topics such as choosing an in-home care provider, the signs of aging, long distance caregiving and communicating with aging parents. The free materials and videos are available at [www.caregiverstress.com](http://www.caregiverstress.com).

### **Why Seniors Resist Help**

“If seniors admit they need help, they feel their independence is in question,” said Chatelain. “Seniors believe that once they acknowledge they need help, they’ll lose control of their affairs. They are trying to maintain dignity. Unless they feel they can trust someone, they resist change. I believe it’s the fear that life as they’ve known it will be taken away from them.”

Sometimes seniors only want help from a son or daughter, which can put undue pressure on that family caregiver who feels he or she can’t call for professional help.

Most caregivers can go into “crisis mode” to rally around a loved one in the short-term, “but you can’t be totally immersed in a crisis mode long-term without your own family, work and health suffering,” according to family caregiving consultant Dr. Amy D’Aprix, who holds a Ph.D. and master’s degree in social work and is author of *From Surviving to Thriving: Transforming Your Caregiving Experience*.

The strain can take a particular toll on working family caregivers. The Home Instead Senior Care study revealed that 42 percent of caregivers spend more than 30 hours a week caregiving. That’s the equivalent of a second full-time job.

And that’s what makes countering that resistance to assistance so important. Chatelain said the battle to turn resistance into assistance can be fierce, like seniors who call police when a professional caregiver shows up. “Education can help arm family caregivers with the tools they need to create a win-win for everyone.”

### **Help (Not) Wanted**

Following are strategies from Home Instead Senior Care® and family caregiving consultant Dr. Amy D’Aprix to help family caregivers turn resistance into assistance.

- Understand where the resistance is coming from. Ask your parent why he or she is resisting. “Mom, I notice that every time I bring up the idea of someone coming in to help, you resist it. Why is that?” Oftentimes older adults don’t realize they are being resistant.

Explain your goals. Remind your loved one that you both want the same thing. Explain that a little extra help can keep them at home longer and will help put your mind at ease as well. Have a candid conversation about the impact this care is having on your life. Oftentimes seniors don't understand the time commitment of a caregiver.

- Bring in outside help. If a relationship with a parent is deteriorating, ask a professional, such as a geriatric care manager, for an assessment.

A third-party professional can provide valuable input. Also, go to [www.4070talk.com](http://www.4070talk.com) for tips on how to talk with a loved one. If you are having problems getting through to your older adult, consider asking another family member or close friend to intervene. If you're not making headway, perhaps there's someone better to talk with your parents.

- Research your options to find the best resources for your loved one. Contact your local Area Agency on Aging or a geriatric care manager to research resources in your community. Or go to [www.homeinstead.com](http://www.homeinstead.com) and click on the resources tab for The Home Care Solution, a guide for family caregivers to help them find the best in-home care for their loved ones.

If you decide outside help is needed, reassure your parents and tell them you have researched caregivers and you are confident you have found the best one you can find to come into the home to help.

- Respect your parent's decisions. Sometimes you won't agree with your parent's decisions and that's okay. As long as your loved one is of sound mind, he or she should have the final say.

A note: If your senior has dementia, seek professional assistance from a doctor or geriatric care manager. Logic often will not work and other strategies must be employed.