

## *How I started my Eldercare Business - A personal story*

Written in year 2003 by Didina Burok

I am a typical, middle aged woman, very much part of the 'sandwich' generation. My husband and I have an eighteen-year old daughter. Seventeen years ago, his mother, who had been widowed a long time, came to live with us because she was no longer able to manage on her own. We welcomed her with open arms. She was 76 at the time, had arthritis in one hip, and her doctor recommended against an operation because of her advanced age and enlarged heart. In the beginning she used a cane, but it wasn't too long before she needed to use a walker. With a walker, her activities became limited, but for a while she was still able to manage on her own, and even helped us during the day while my husband and I were out working. Just having Grandma in the house was also good for our daughter when she came back from elementary school.

Ten years ago, at the age of 80, my mother came to live with us because she too was no longer able to manage on her own. We welcomed her with open arms, just like we did my mother-in-law. Luckily, we had sufficient space in our home to accommodate both, since we anticipated the possibility when we bought our house. The first few years things went rather well and the two mothers would entertain each other and keep each other company. About 6 years ago, my husband lost his job. He chose not to go back into the corporate world, but rather to stay home and be full-time caregiver for his mom and mine. Just about at that time, his mom's arthritis had taken over her entire body and she became wheel-chair bound, totally dependent on someone for daily living. About four years ago, my mom developed dementia and initially became very confused, paranoid, and accusatory. Eventually she became very quiet and withdrawn. The companionship the mothers were able to give each other initially became strained to non-existent. They stopped playing cards and communicated less and less each day.

Today, my mother is almost 90 and my mother-in-law 93. They are still living with us and we will not consider placing them in a facility. During the past seven years, our family has been foregoing vacations, social events, and many other activities in order to take care of the mothers. We took only one major vacation with our daughter since she was 12. This year she's off to

college and we may never again have an opportunity to take a vacation as a family.

I wonder how many other couples or middle-aged individuals find themselves in a similar situation. Not wanting to place their parent(s) in a facility, wanting to give them the best they can, but sacrificing their lives and marriages in the process. Some do this kind of care giving while living with the parent(s), others do it by living nearby the elderly parents and spending a great deal of their day or weekends doing chores and helping out. I bet it happens a lot.

With advances in the medical field, with the increasing life expectancy, and with the baby-boomers approaching the golden age, our situation will become even more common.

Most elderly people do not want to be a burden on their adult children. They deny needing help for longer than it is either safe or good for them. Often, they fall or hurt themselves doing chores they should not be attempting, or have driving accidents because they drive beyond their capabilities. When they do realize they need help, they expect the adult children to take care of them. These adult children either have their own family to raise, have full time jobs, or are approaching retirement and are looking forward to some free time, perhaps plan on moving to a different community, or traveling. Putting aside their own lives, most adult children will stay put and help out, just like we did. Some will place their parents in assisted living or nursing homes. Others will continue to help them while living in separate homes. In most, if not all cases, the relationships become strained. Full-time caregiving is very stressful on the caregiver, as well as on the recipient. When caring for a parent, there's little time left for quality family life. All the 'together' time is spent in doing chores and running errands. The elder person feels shame and guilt for having to rely on the family member. The family member feels guilt and stress for having the responsibility squarely on his/her shoulders. There often is no happy ground.

When the elder person does not require medical assistance, there is a solution that is a happy medium between institutionalizing and providing full-time caregiving by a family member. By bringing in a qualified caregiver, even for just a few hours a day, the elderly can remain independent at home and

can get assistance with the daily chores. They can live in a cleaner, safer, and more pleasant environment, can have companionship, and have someone to turn to for the little things and for the big ones. Having an outside caregiver is also far less expensive than a full time facility and the care is one-on-one. Having a hired caregiver also goes a long way in relieving the stress for the family caregivers, who can now enjoy their own lives to a fuller extent.

This is how Care4You came into being, a company that aims at helping the elderly live independently in their home for as long as possible. Care4you employs top-notch caregivers and places them in the homes of clients who either have no family members to help out, or who want to relieve their loved ones from the daily stresses of caregiving. Care4You is a win-win proposition. Care4You provides employment to caring, honest, people who want to help others. Care4You provides help to the elderly who need help and relieves the family caregiver, making for a better, happier environment for everyone.

**Care4You, that's what we do...**