



A Simple Way to Kill Family Conflict

By Meg LaPorte

Family conflict is a fact of life, especially when it comes to caring for an ailing parent or loved one who lives far away. Siblings often disagree over caregiving decisions, some do heavier lifting than others, and parents sometimes play favorites, all of which adds to the strife.

More often than not, this dysfunction finds its way onto the laps of paid caregivers and their administrators, especially if mom or dad has moved to an assisted living community. Nurses, nurse assistants, and executive directors are no strangers to contending with a family that is conflicted over how their loved one is treated, where they live, and even what activities they participate in.

Survey Says...

According to a survey of family caregivers, some 43 percent of U.S. families and 41 percent of Canadian families, one sibling has the responsibility for providing most or all of the care for Mom or Dad. In only 2 percent of families in the U.S. and 3 percent in Canada did the siblings split the caregiving responsibility equally.*

Wouldn't it be great if senior living providers offered a solution that helps families avoid falling into conflict and helping all family members stay connected? The folks at [LifeShare Technologies](#), a Senior Housing Forum partner, felt similarly when they created the Family Mobile App and the In-Room LifeShare solution.

As Simple as a Television

The In-Room solution is designed to help friends and family stay in touch via simplified technology. According to Miles McCollum, LifeShare account executive, no computers, tablets, or smartphones are needed for the In-Room technology. “Just a TV, any TV,” he says. “It’s simple to setup and simple to use, because we believe the most successful technology is the easiest to use technology.”

Residents and families can stay connected via email, social media, text messaging, pictures, and videos using their existing TV and a remote control. Users also have access to games, therapeutic music, faith programming, weather, news, and more.

Strengthening the connection between residents and families is helped by LifeShare’s mobile app, which gives family members the ability to see everything from daily activities calendars to the daily menus. Another cool feature of the app is the ability to designate a “family manager” who can manage the account, facility activities, add and edit photos, update calendar appointments, and write notes to other family members. What’s more, the app can also remind users if too much time has passed since they last send a photo or message to their loved one.

A Daughter Sees a Difference

Two of the top stressors causing family conflicts are distance and illness, according to experts. LifeShare helps families stave off such dysfunctional dynamics by helping loved ones stay connected with photos, emails, and messaging. A woman whose father lived 2,200 miles away, praised LifeShare for improving her father’s quality of life due to the ease with which she and her relatives could share photos and converse via email and messaging. “I was amazed at the difference in his socialization from our visit last April to our visit this year in March,” she wrote. “He may be limited to a wheelchair and a care home, but his mind is able to connect with family that he hasn’t seen for years, share their stories with others, and keep his memory sharp. I can imagine as the years progress that something as simple as photos, calendars, weather, and announcements that are pertinent to his daily life will help keep him focused and in touch with the world around him.”

She adds: “If you were to enter his room today, you would hear him humming as he putters around his room...and probably see his slideshow running rather than the TV. It brings tears to my eyes to see how much this simple form of communication has changed his life at ninety years old.”

**The study, conducted by The Boomer Project, included 711 adults in the U.S. and 383 in Canada ages 35-64 with living siblings or stepsiblings, who said they either currently provide care for a parent or older relative, or did provide care in the past 18 months.*



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