

Caring for Your Loved One
Article #5

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Dear Geriatric Care Manager,

I have recently become the primary caregiver for my husband. He was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease a few years ago and it has just recently become debilitating. He was always the one who took care of everything in the household and now I am left with everything. I have to go through the mail and sort out what is "junk" from the bills and know what to pay and when to pay it. He was also very interested in stocks and the financial world. I know he invested our money but I don't know where! I am also left with finding an accountant to do our taxes now. On top of this, I now need to be able to manage his health care needs too. It is all so overwhelming at times. How do I sort through everything and not get so overwhelmed?

Signed,

Overwhelmed Role Reversal

Dear Overwhelmed,

Caregiving can be overwhelming. Knowing that you now have to take on some of your husband's responsibilities can be an added stressor. Now is the time to sit down with your husband, and if possible a child or family member, and have some important conversations. Make sure to take comprehensive notes. Ask your husband if he has a system in place that he used for dealing with the household finances and investments. It will be important to determine the locations of all important papers and documents. Deciding upon a filing system and a central location where these papers can be kept should make it easier to manage the finances in the future. It is also important to have your spouse share the names and contact information of any service providers such as lawyers, accountants, brokers, and financial managers. If any online banking is done, you should find out all user names and passwords.

Obtaining and organizing all of this information can be quite a task, but there are professionals who can help. If you enlist the services of a geriatric care manager this professional will be sensitive to the circumstances and needs of older adults and individuals with physical, functional and cognitive issues, and can help you navigate in terms of finding additional assistance. There are individuals who work as professional organizers and bill payers. A referral from a care manager will provide you with the reassurance that the provider is legitimate and, if required, credentialed. As with many situations thinking ahead, careful planning and organizing will make a positive difference in dealing with the challenges you face. Good luck!

For more information, contact Beverly Mishkin, LCSW, Director of Senior Services at beverlym@jfcsonline.org or 609-987-8100.