



Links We Need & Links We Weave

[1]An AARP Public Policy Institute report documented that **42.1 million family caregivers in the U.S. provide daily care to an adult with limitations**, and 61.6 million family members provide care at some time during the year. **If these people were paid it would cost the economy (taxpayers) \$450 billion dollars a year!** Seen very simply, millions and millions of adults with limitations are totally dependent on family members for most of their help and services.

Because of a lack of means and ability, many families in need first reach out or are referred to a variety of available social services. Most find themselves connecting with a social worker. Of course, we know social workers (not clinical social workers) ~~help people~~ deal with challenges and a wide range of situations and with many diverse populations, including children, people with disabilities, and people with addictions.

[2]While there are currently 650,500 social workers in the US, and employment of social workers is growing at a current rate of 25 percent every 9 years, faster than the average for all other occupations, we have (another) problem that could put millions more in trouble. Maybe statistics cloud the dilemma, so let's be clear: **the 650,500 social workers in the U.S. do not serve the 42.1 million family caregivers in the U.S. who provide daily care to an adult with limitations.**

Currently, the number of social workers (which costs each taxpayer over \$7,800 per person - and will rise 70 percent in 2018 to \$13,100 per person) will not keep up with both the current clientele and the ever increasing demands of new claimants. Be assured, government support will not increase proportionately.

Now, with millions of families seeking any kind of help and millions more relying upon a less than adequate supply of social workers to meet their needs, is the right time to ask: **How do we provide individuals and families with a healthier network of interdependence - reducing dependency, increasing outcomes, decreasing cost, and encouraging interdependence among family and friends?**

[3]Our answer must be to grow more independent through interdependence - to every human has the need to help and be helped, to ask and to respond, to build and to nurture. ***And for you - that time is - now!***

- **We need to network** - to see what we have in place and what we can build for the future. Put a sheet of paper in front of you and start building or putting your personal community/network in place. **Let's make a list of friends and family, and next to each, list a specialty they are known for, some thing they like to do, or just simply list them as a general helper.** From such a list come those who are or can be available to talk, advise, help and/or take action on your behalf.
- **Next, let's take the conversation "on the road."** Set aside time to communicate (email, letter, in person) - it will serve you well to start the conversation now and not just when you're in a crisis. **Let all of your community know that you appreciate them as friends/family and hope to be able to call on them when you need someone to talk to, advise or help you, or take action when you're in need - and you would like to do the same for them - be part of their personal safety net!** Check to see that they want to be part of your network/community - an don't be scared off - **research tells us most people respond positively to being asked for help.**

We're not kidding ourselves or you - these are two huge steps and climbing big steps doesn't come easy - but **these are steps worth taking before you find yourself entangled in the dependency, cost and outcome of our ever stress and fractured social system.**

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