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Healthy Aging

Getting aligned with your siblings as you share parent care

By Juliet Holt Klinger, MA

When a parent requires care later in life it can put a strain on sibling relationships and often an opportunity to create a family plan is missed. Advanced planning and having critical conversations before the need arises is the key to creating harmony later in your journey.

For some families, it's clear which of the siblings will step in and assume the caregiving role. But it's very important not to assume that just because one sibling isn't working full-time or because one lives down the street and has been helping with a few little errands already, that they are necessarily volunteering to be the primary caregiver on an ongoing basis. One thing is for sure, when caregiving gets underway, the situation can get complicated without a plan in place.

As your parents age and if you are noticing changes in their abil-

ity to manage by themselves, it's a good time to start conversations with your siblings. While I would always recommend getting your parents involved in discussions about their advancing needs so you are clear on their goals and wishes, you may want to start with a conversation just amongst the siblings. Be prepared that not all siblings will have the same response to your parent's increasing needs and some may use denial as a coping mechanism. The idea that Mom or Dad has a dementia diagnosis, or that they need more care, can be overwhelming for some and those not as close to the situation may need more information about what your parent/s need. Don't only cite your opinions but gather information from the doctor or other health professionals.

As you broach this conversation as siblings, it can be helpful to lay down a few ground rules. First, try to move beyond the lifelong roles and labels that you all have always played in your family system ("the responsible one", "the screw-up", etc.). For instance, the oldest daughter does not automatically have to take the lead, and the sibling without children might be the most nurturing caregiver. Try not to carry all the baggage from your years as a family into this new caregiving landscape and remember that it might be a good time to start with some fresh perspectives and

Continued on page 10

JLYC Grants – from page 1

I'm looking forward to the coming year," says Burch.

The highlight of the Jack London Yacht Club Season is the "Jack to Jack Yacht Race" which will be on Saturday, March 20, 2027, where "captains" will watch their yachts race down Sonoma Creek behind the back patio of the Jack London Saloon, in Glen Ellen.

Applications for the current Jack London Yacht Club grant cycle

are due August 31. Recipients will be announced at a grant distribution social, date and location TBD. Eligibility information and an online application is available on their website. More information about membership and the Jack London Yacht Club is available at <https://jacklondonyachtclub.org/grantsjacklondonyachtclub.org>.



Source: Jack London Yacht Club
Representatives from the nonprofits who won grants from the Jack London Yacht Club in 2025 gather for a celebration photo.

Follow the free-ranging mind of Jim Shere online at jshere.substack.com.

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LETTERS

To the Editor

In regard to your article on July 15, about dog citations being given at Shaw Park.

About 10 years ago, there was a group of residents who met with the regional park people about trying to find a designated area in that park for dogs to romp, roam and run free. But those involved could not come up with a location that all could agree on, including the neighbors adjacent to the park.

So, the compromise was reached as stated on the sign, Monday to Friday Sunrise to 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. to Sunset.

My speculation is, as stated in the article, somebody has called and the reason for that call most likely is, many dog owners do not have sufficient recall in their dogs (or any recall). As a dog owner myself, I've had many dogs run up to me and the owner yell from a distance, "Oh, he's friendly," but not even make the attempt to come get them.

Even a friendly dog can be a nuisance if unwanted.

Puzzle answers – from page 3

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I welcome somebody taking up the mantle again and seeing if they can agree on an enclosed dog park.

Rose Cardinale
Kenwood

To the editor:

I have to comment on our CPR Instruction today at the Kenwood Fire Station. It was a full house and the fireman/CPR instructor/paramedic/ and all the other hats he wears held an outstanding presentation for us all. We are so deeply appreciative of his in-depth, knowledgeable, clear communication. He was so patient with all the questions and I simply can't say enough for this two-hour learning experience. We all had a chance to apply his instruction and felt so gratified when we left. Thank you

to the two firemen who were there to assist as well! One with technical help and one to field questions. What a great morning and a world of education for the community. If just one life can be saved from this talk it will be a wonderful miracle. Many thanks.

Mrs. Ross
Kenwood

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Healthy Aging – continued from page 10

keep your parents' needs as the focus of the conversation.

As you discuss the caregiving responsibilities as siblings, keep in mind that not every person has to help at the same time. Make sure that each sibling is encouraged to be honest about their current bandwidth to help and avoid placing judgement or assuming that all help must come in the same form. One sibling may have more time to contribute, one may choose to contribute financially, and one may choose to help later. If you are choosing to share caregiving responsibilities, utilize each other's strengths as you divide the tasks. Perhaps the sister who is the accountant would be the best person to take care of the finances, and the brother who teaches school could cover more of the care in the summer months, etc.

If it is decided that one sibling is going to assume primary caregiving responsibility, then it is essential that the other siblings learn how best to support them. Often just asking "What can I do to help?" or telling them, "Let me

know if you need help," isn't enough. You may need to be more specific about what you can do to help, "How about if I take Mom to get her hair done this week?" Sometimes the most important help might not be doing anything at all but simply being a reliable and supportive listener for the caregiving sibling who may need a safe place to vent.

Every family will face the challenges of parent care differently and each sibling will bring their own dynamic to the situation, but with honest, open, and early communication on the topic, you can hopefully reach alignment with your siblings.

Juliet Holt Klinger is a gerontologist specializing in dementia care. She has spent the last 40 years working directly with people living with dementia and their families. She has worked in executive leadership capacities for the largest companies in the dementia care space, and is well-known for her development of innovative, person-centered programs and services. Juliet focuses in her practice on curating and harnessing emerging and existing technologies to best serve older adults with neurocognitive challenges. Juliet also shares the role of family caregiver for a loved one with dementia with her husband Christian.

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