

CARING OF ELDERS



K. Vaitheeswaran
(Psychological Counsellor)

A Health Guide for family members, welfare workers and care givers

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**A Health guide for family members, Elders,
forerunners of Society and Welfare Workers**

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Foreword

We cross over many barriers and reach elders stage in our life. Some look old in their fifties mainly due to diseases and frailty. Some even after 70 years actively and healthily carry on their normal life happily just like the middle aged people. Though we are old, we always like to lead a healthy life. It entirely depends on us to design our life. It is rather difficult to differentiate between normal elders and those becoming elderly due to ailments.

Immunity and Elderly

As we grow old, our immunity system gradually slows down. The immunity deteriorates due to the changes that take place while aging, the diseases that affects, and the side effects of drugs, including psychological factors and relationship within the family and in the neighborhood. When immunity goes down, certainly we are exposed to infections.

Elders who are living in this country are an important target group that needs special care and attention in their late stages. It is not easy to obtain medical facilities in Government Medical Institutions to all those who have reached 40 years. If they can identify any abnormalities and go for treatment at the earlier stage they can always save themselves from great risk.

The need for caring of Elders.

Parents undergo all kinds of difficulties and bring up their children to become useful citizens in the society. Now the parents have grown old and it is the responsibility of their children to look after them. In many families, most of the children have gone abroad. Due to war situation people are displaced, under insurmountable sufferings. Therefore looking after the elders has become a big problem. In many instances, elders struggle in loneliness.

As a first step in solving this problem, we have to create community awareness among the general public. Community leaders, social workers and welfare workers should be given an orientation programme on "caring of elders" so that they can identify any abnormalities and refer them for medical care at an early stage. The patients who are continuing treatment specially for non communicable diseases (Viz . Diabetes, Hypertension, Asthma, and psychiatric illness) have to be followed up to avoid complications.

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Chapter 1.1

CARING OF ELDERS

Getting old is a natural phenomenon in life. It is our desire that those who belong to this period of life should remain healthy. What is meant by an Elder? The normal physical activities of a person gradually getting weaker... and weaker namely vision, hearing, loss of teeth including psychological imbalance. This situation can happen at the age of 60,65 or 70.

According to World Health Organization, persons above the age of 65 may be considered as Elders. They are classified as follows:

- a) 65-75 years age group – Normal Elders
- b) Over 75 years – Actual Elders

Further W.H.O states in its declaration of 1996 thus: Healthy elders are an asset to their families, to their community and to the economy of the nation. They can be useful to the community, if they are full of vigour and hard working and therefore countries should consider healthy elders, as an important resourceful group in its development. Elders should not be regarded as a cursed group, but a group that can still solve problems. Mostly, we speak of their needs, not about, what we can obtain from them. The progress of civilization in a society can be assessed by the status and regard given by that society to the elders.

During one forth of our life time, we grow, rest of the period, we become adults. Reaching 65 years may be considered as the beginning of old age. We could gauge, the health of an individual by the physical, psychological behaviour, life style, his habits and method of undertaking social activities.

Increasing Elders

Today 14% of the population in developed countries are elders. In Sri Lanka the population in the year between 1981-1991 has

increased five –fold. But during the said period over 65 years age group has increased by eleven fold in Jaffna District. According to the survey conducted by the Government Agent in the year 1997, 11.8% of the people were over 65 years out of which 2.2% had increased to 3.5% in 1946 and 4.% in 1971.

Further-

- a. In 1911, 218 infant deaths were reported, out of every 1000 births. Today it has decreased to 17.
- b. In 1921, 210 maternal deaths occurred out of 10,000 births. But today it is only 3 deaths for 10,000 births.

Further progress in this sphere are as follows:

- ✓ Progress in environmental sanitation – use of latrines.
- ✓ Arrival of new drugs and their use.
- ✓ Care of expectant mothers and improvement of child care services.
- ✓ Improvement of maternal and child care services including immunisation facilities.
- ✓ Regular monitoring of infants in relation to growth and development with the use of growth monitoring chart.
- ✓ Control of malaria.
- ✓ Progressive changes in life style.
- ✓ Progress in general education of the community.

On account of higher standard in female education in our country, maternal deaths, infant deaths and deaths in general have declined. Medical facilities have increased during the last century. Hence even the handicapped could

live longer. On an average over 75 years age group suffer from many diseases. Only 10% of the total population live without diseases.

Increase in life expectancy

In view of the above reasons life expectancy of an individual is getting increased. In Sri Lanka at the beginning of the last century a person could live only for 35 years. But a person born today could live for more than 72 years. In the past, many mothers died due to complications in pregnancy. They die in young age. They could not live for long years. It is male who reached their maturity. It was the males who lived longer. The life expectancy in females was less.

Year	LIFE EXPECTANCY	
	Male	Female
1990-1992	36.4	34.2
1950	56.4	54.8
1967	64.8	66.8
1981	67.8	71.7
1991	69.5	74.2

Reference: Book on Elders – Dr.N.Swarajah Pg-12. After 1960, age of life expectancy of females is more than that of males. Thus among the elderly, females are more in numbers.

Reasons for the increase of Female Elders

- During normal marriage, age of male is usually 5-6 years more than females.
- Among the elders, number of widows are more since the age of life expectancy of males being less.

These widows are compelled to live at the mercy of their children without the life partner for many years. Furthermore, due to the recent war situation in our country death and disappearance of husbands contribute more to the increase in the number of widows. A person can live happily only when he is healthy. Therefore we will have to safeguard our health. An unhealthy person, although he is young will be a burden to the family. However he has to depend on others.

Definition of Health

According to world health organization health is a state of complete physical, mental, social and spiritual well being and not merely the absence of Disease or infirmity. When a person is diseased or infirmed, he cannot live happily. It is after the identification of signs and symptoms we could see a person as 'Patient'. It takes a longer time to diagnose the illness. All health care activities depend on the promotion of health of an individual. Therefore health is considered as a valuable asset. 'Arokiya Pramalaba' Pali.

Physical Wellbeing

Keeping the entire body in good health is called physical wellbeing. Of course injuries and sickness affect our health. When a person gets his basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter satisfactorily, his physical well being improves.

Mental health

Whenever sickness, deformity, loss of property or family members, occur our mind becomes weak and lifeless. Then not only anguish sets in but also our relationship with family members and others gets affected. When we control our feelings, anger, hatred, fear, doubt, stubbornness, unhappiness, loneliness,

suspensions, feeling to smash objects and unable to concentrate and attempt of suicides sets in. Because of continuous stress a person can become a psychiatric patient. When a person is physically affected, his mental affliction becomes unavoidable.

Social Wellbeing

A person's health depends on his environment and his social state. Taste of water will be according to the nature of the soil. Likewise, an individual's behaviour, knowledge and attitude would be always according to his social atmosphere. His habits and behaviours too will be the same. Man cannot live alone. He will be contented only when he mixes with the society. For example relationship between husband and wife is indispensable. When a person avoids relationship with neighbours and relations he may become a victim of stress. If it continues for a longer period, he may be exposed to non-communicable diseases like diabetes, hypertension, heart attack, skin diseases, asthma etc.

The school we attended goes a long way to show our behaviour. Further, the friends and colleagues with whom we associate exhibits our habits and behaviour. Therefore it is necessary that we should respect the social values of our elders, parents and teachers. The conduct including that of our elders depends on what kind of social relationship we were brought up. Even the health status of people depends on their social, cultural and religious beliefs of the community. Communicable and non-communicable diseases that occurs among the people have very close relationship with their social customs and behaviours. Moreover, addiction to liquor and drugs, smoking, sexual behaviour and food habits are all inter connected with the social background. Therefore, our life must be based on good environment.

Spiritual wellbeing

All the efforts taken to intergrate the mind is helpful to preserve the spiritual wellbeing of an individual. All the religions have designed their concepts in order to concentrate our minds. Non – Communicable diseases including skin ailments and asthma are caused among the elders due to stress. As elders we should be conscious of our spirituality.

We can achieve the following in this way

- Enjoy mental peace and satisfaction – shun the evil thoughts.
- Become patience – Differ graciously and forgive others.
- Loving others as thyself.

Avoid anger. Be kind and helpful to others. By observing the above, the individual becomes physically, mentally, socially and spiritually sound, constituting to the “Health” of an individual. In order to promote these, Health Department provides all kinds of facilities. Clinics are conducted for the welfare of mothers all over the country – namely ante-natal, post-natal, including family planning. Thus we are able to live longer. When the elders are healthy, the economy of the family would definitely prosper. Elders should not be considered as a burden to the family. Their life experiences will be useful to both the family and the community. Therefore it is important to take care of elders.

Upliftment of the Health of Elders – A Good Example

Marimuthu is 79 years old. He used to visit the garden and help his children. He underwent cataract surgery and was wearing spectacles. His wife passed away four years ago. Hence he was forced to attend to his needs by himself. Last week he was checked for his hearing. There was wax in his ear. It was

removed by the Doctor and he is better now. He is able to read the newspapers without difficulty. For the past 3 years, he was elected as the patron of the community centre in the neighbourhood. Also he visits daily, the Murukan kovil situated nearby before taking his breakfast in the morning. In this way, he spends his time profitably in his old age to the best of his satisfaction.

What is old age

- Normal functions of organs lessens.
- Physic gradually gets affected.
- Functions of cells and tissues get weakened.
- Changes in habits and behaviour.

Further inability to move the limbs, difficulty in getting up. In some cases, loss of senses and unable to use the toilet etc. These symptoms are common in old age.

LET US FACE THE OLD AGE

Feeling old age:

Early morning cold season, Sivaguru couldn't get up. Ache in the knee was felt by him. He got up with difficulty and sat for some time. The pain in the knee subsides little by little. The whole body was paining. Though he goes to the bathroom, he feels that he cannot prolong life in this manner. Now he is 86 years old. He asks himself whether he can move about alone in his old. Sivaguru has forgotten even his name. Are you absent minded like him? Sometimes elders search for their keys. The problem is a challenge in old age.

How to face the old age?

1. **The biggest resource is activities with perseverance.**

Whether we are young or old, we must always be active.

2. **Simplicity in life.**

When we maintain a healthy relationship with our family members and neighbours, we will be able to face challenges even in old age.

3. **Absent mindedness is common in all age groups.**

However, dementia does not occur on account of general debility. When we grow old it can happen. Prof. Dr. Michel D. Livy of New York University states that most of the elders lead a normal life without any mental derangement till the last. It is true that youngsters can remember things better than elders. Medical Professor Dr. Richard Tesdark states, if we do not consider time, even elders have a good memory like youngsters. He further points out that sufficient

continuous education and opportunities for skill development can make elders to remember better and carry out their normal activities well.

4. **Problems pertaining to physique.**

These problems starts in middle age and appears dominantly in old age. They become worse when the body becomes weak. Heart diseases, Hypertension, Cancer etc. can lay the seeds while a person is young.

Problems confronting old age:

Most of the people does not take seriously the physical needs of the elderly due to economic setback, inability to obtain the basic medical facilities, displacement from permanent residences, lack of transport facilities, lack of understanding about the illness and its complications. These contribute to various physical conditions prevailing among the elders. It is natural that various kinds of problems can prop up among the elders. Of course, they have been toiling hard for their family as well as for their community, society over the years. Therefore, we have to take care of their needs. Stress, Frustration, loss of vigor and vitality, absence of self confidence, loss of faith, giving interpretation for our thinking, sudden loss of family members (specially the life partner – Husband or wife) and economic problems. These can affect the average functioning of this system at anytime diminishing the physical capabilities gradually. Respiratory diseases, heart diseases, kidney, skin and psychological disorders can occur.

Impact of diseases are manifold

Though the basic factors of diseases are general, their impact are varied. Since many diseases appear at the same time, the symptoms can indicate many an ailment. Generally patients come out with several complaints. Hence diagnosis becomes difficult. Some elders do not show any symptoms but die bedridden.

Elders may be taking various drugs for a number of ailments simultaneously . Reactions of complications can bring lot of changes in their systems. Therefore they should understand the contra -indications that can happen in using these drugs.

Some problems they are not aware of :-

1. Inability to chew and swallow food
2. Indigestion of food
3. No appetite
4. No thirst
5. No taste
6. Constipation
7. Unable to walk or move about
8. Dryness of skin
9. Vitamin and mineral deficiencies
10. Unable to have a sound sleep during night
11. Anemia etc.,

Importance of medical guidance

- Food served to the elders should be easily digestible.
- Drink adequate amount of water, liquid food (minimum two liters of water daily).
- Keep fit. They must move about carefully: if necessary use of walking stick is recommended.
- Elders normally seek treatment only after it becomes worse with complications eg. Loss of eye sight; Diabetes - wounds not healing for a long period. Hypertension – coma or paralysis. Cancer – unable to swallow or vomiting blood.

Note: Even medical consultants fail to diagnose these ailments, when they are consulted.

Reasons attributed

- a. Symptoms of diseases are mistaken for old age problems.
- b. During medical check up medical personal fail to diagnose certain problems.
- c. Not prompt in taking treatment.
- d. Taking unnecessary drugs – wrong prescriptions at times.
- e. Patients fail to divulge their complaints or sufferings.

Remarks: Awareness about the ailment of Elders to be highlighted to the public – regarding early diagnosis of illness. Prompt treatment, complications etc. The community has a big responsibility in fulfilling the needs of the elders.

Basic needs of Elders

a. Sleep

On an average, an individual needs at least six to seven hours of sleep daily. As age increases they find it difficult to sleep during nights. During day time most of the elders sleep. As a result sleep during night is disturbed. Hence, the elders should be guided to spend the time profitably during the day time.

b. Rest

Nowadays most of the people are interested to amass wealth and power. But there are instances where most of the people are unable to enjoy what they have saved. They die in harness. Most of the youngsters who have gone abroad work continuously for long hours (14-16 hrs) neglecting their health. When they reach the middle age (45-50 yrs) they become sick and fall a victim to non-Communicable diseases. Therefore it is very important to make the best use of their leisure hours in resting and relaxing.

c. Relax

It is indispensable that both physical and mental relaxation are required for an individual. But most of the elders are unable to relax or concentrate and are under stress. They are unable to sit and read or actively listen to any conversation. They are unable to enjoy normal life. Hence they suffer from having a peaceful sleep. They develop headache, irritation of stomach, ulceration of digestive track and other non-communicable diseases.

Whatever religion they belong to , prayer goes a long way to give them relief. Helping the needy wherever possible will give ample satisfaction. It is a blessing indeed If we can live without any ailments in our old age. We learn that great men like Rajaji, Kamaraj, Annai Theresa dedicated themselves in serving the nation even in their old age.

HEALTH PROMOTION

1. Exercise

If we are active in our day to day activities, we can lead a happy and contented life without any ailments. Walking is the best form of exercise. 30-40 minutes walk daily makes us strong and refreshed. To have our joints and muscles in full tone, we need exercise.

Benefits.

- a. Excess calories in our body can be eliminated; thereby obesity can also be averted
- b. More calcium could be stored in the bones
- c. Muscles get strengthened
- d. Removal of constipation
- e. As we are active and resourceful to others, we develop mental satisfaction

2. Planning the day to day activities

Time management is very essential specially for elders; keeping ourselves active without giving room for laziness. If we want to be healthy, the day to day activities must be planned on a methodical basis. Morning daily routines, religious observances, yoga exercises, exercise including walking, reading useful materials, helping the needy are some of them.

3. Food habits

Elders ought to be careful regarding their food habits. Balanced diet is recommended avoiding fats and carbohydrates excessively. Lack of adequate nutrition may lead to anemia, malnutrition and vitamin deficiency. Over nutrition may lead to obesity, and non communicable diseases. Lack of fibre may lead to constipation. Hence elders are advised to take more fruits and vegetables with a view to obtaining balanced diet.

4. Personal Hygiene

It includes the following in our daily activities:

- Defecation in the morning; washing of hands with soap and water after using the toilets, before having meals, before cooking and serving meals.
- Taking bath daily, wearing clean cloths, cutting of nails.
- Keeping the head clean.
- Maintain good oral hygiene – brushing of teeth at least twice a day specially before going to bed at night.
- Oiling of skin to prevent dryness of skin. Promote the use of mild soap.
- Diabetic patients must wash their feet daily before going to bed during night and it might be wiped thoroughly to avoid wounds in feet.
- Anyone reaching 40 years must go for a medical checkup to identify any abnormalities.
- Females screening for breast cancer and cancer in the womb is very important.

5. Prevention of accidents

75% of accidents among elders happen in their homes falling from bed while getting up, slipping from steps while using bath rooms, wet floors are few to mention. If they fall, the whole balance period of life may have to be spent in bed. Vigilant activities and maintaining a good equilibrium of mind are essential in our daily routines.

6. Mental health

It is necessary for the elders to keep occupied in some useful venture. When you respect others, they will respect you. We must make good companions of them and always keep in touch with people of wisdom. Being cordial with the community, we can lead a happy and peaceful life. If you try to avoid the neighbours and the community, a feeling of loneliness might set in. Hence elders must always keep good relationship with everyone.

BECOMING ELDERS GRACEFULLY

When the elders receive physical, mental, social and spiritual needs, their life becomes fruitful. Getting old is not a disease. It is only a stage in our life . If elders are given care, protection security and affection, they will lead a life of contentment. Hence elders should engage in health promotional activities in their early life, if they want to live longer and free from ailments.

a. Physical factors

- Appearance of long term diseases.
- Abnormalities in our food habit might bring out obesity and deficiency diseases, constipation etc.,
- Difficulty in getting admission for treatment in Government hospitals.
- Physical abnormalities.
- Unable to lead a normal life – inability to move about.

b. Psychological factors

- Loss of properties; Loss of members in the family.
- No peace of mind in prolonging life due to displeasure among the family members.
- Long term illnesses – and a feeling of loneliness.
- Loss or declining of self respect.

c. Social factors

- Less opportunities for employment.
- Change of life style. Unable to meet the day to day demands
- Economic problems.
- Feeling of being a burden to others.
- Loss of close relations, family members or the better half
- Declining of social status.
- Helplessness -No one to look after, Hopelessness - feeling of emptiness.
- Unable to keep company with others. We must have good friends to share our feelings. It is a challenge to have good friends.

d. Spiritual aspects

- Develop skills in concentrating our mind on a particular aspect. Develop skills in self integration.
- Prayer, worship and meditation.
- Group singing, reciting mandras or jebams and participating in Bajans.
- Deep breathing; yogasanas and pranayamas.
- Helping the needy – serving the community, helping the elders and bed ridden patients in attending to their daily needs.

When we follow the above aspects, our life would become smooth and we will be able to attain a feeling of satisfaction. Accordingly if we follow promotion of health care services from young age, we can avoid becoming sick at an early stage and it is possible to lead a healthy life in our old age.

What I kept, I lost
What I have, I spent
What I gave, I have

- Proverbs – 25:26

Blessed are they with a cherry smile
Who stop and chat for a little while

Blessed are they who never say
You have told that twice today.

Chapter 1.5

WHEN PARENTS BECOME OLD

At times, crowded life in a small house can bring about many inconveniences to both the children and other inmates of the house. In such instances, patience becomes a vital need. Often we can see grand parents telling tales to their grand children, enjoying their presence. Elders giving small presents to their grand children is praise worthy.

There are instances when parents become old, their children face numerous problems. They can't even entertain their friends or relations due to lack of accommodation or financial commitments. Their studies some times get disturbed as they have to look after them, incase their parents are paralyzed or bed ridden.

Becoming an Elder is a challenge to every one.

At times caring of Elders has become an acute problem because of chaotic life, displacement from their permanent residences, economic setbacks, long term illnesses etc. Today in many families most of the children have left their parents alone and have migrated to foreign countries for better prospects. Some children have separated their father and mother for their own convenience, though they were living together for a long period (40-50 yrs). Husband and wife in their old age understand their individual needs better than their children or grand children. Hence it is advisable not to separate them. If we attempt to separate them, they will feel lonely, because they depend on each other.

In such a state the following aspects have to be considered

- Elders also require certain needs as youngsters.
- Their basic needs namely food, clothing, shelter and safe environment to be looked into. In most places their basic needs are not attended to.
- They should be interested in their life and their day to day activities.
- Some children control their parents telling them not to do any work and restrict their movements. Anyone should be active and engaged in some physical activity. Then only they can lead a normal life.
- They need self respect. They like to be appreciated for the work they are performing.
- They wish freedom and independence.
- They need money for their incidental expenses.
- When we are making any important decision, it is better to consult them also.
- Difficulty in hearing, loss of eye sight. Unable to walk about freely without help for the whole day, nobody goes close by and listen to their needs and wants – these are some of their problems.
- Although grand children are available, they often neglect the elders or grand parents.
- Elders leaving their permanent residences and settle in other's residences may lose their independence and freedom.
- Selling their land and properties should not be done in a hurry and without their full consent.

After effects

- a. Children or grand children have no time to visit their parents. Hence it develops constant stress.
- b. Hence it is always wise for the elders to live away from their children.

Case study -1

Sarankan (a Telecom. Engineer) his wife and children are shifting to a new house. They invite the mother (wife's) a teacher who is living alone 250 km away from Colombo. So she came and joined them. One day there was a Tele-drama 'Annamalai' in the T.V. Suddenly son-in-law popped in. He doesn't like his children watching T.V. all the time. He stopped the T.V. and went inside. Mother-in-law couldn't tolerate this incident. She was silent for days. Due to her stress, she couldn't face her son-in-law for a long period.

Note:

In case any mishap takes place in a house (death of a husband or wife) never decide to leave the house immediately. In course of time, you might face a happy incident, occasion taking place there.

How can children help their parent's needs happily

- Children should understand their needs empathetically.
- They can send some special meal to their parents.
- They can take them for medical checkup.
- They can help in cleaning their rooms, wash their cloths. Help them to perform their religious rites.
- Meet them regularly and listen to their suppressed feeling and guide them.

-
- Helping them to read and write whenever necessary. In short, it is the responsibility of the children to look after their parents when they are old. They have done enough for them lest the bitter experiences they faced in life. Sometimes, parents come to live with their son or daughter, in which case, they shouldn't be harassed or humiliated. Tolerance is needed in such a situation. Arrangements should be made for them to stay comfortably within their means.

A sense of belonging

In each and every family a sense of belonging should exist. Elders should not be allowed to do odd jobs like sweeping the house, washing the utensils or cloths etc. We need not praise them; but they should appreciate their work. They must feel that they are recognized in the society.

Problematic parents

Some parents are stubborn. They interfere with the work of the children. By interfering, the children would feel that they are humiliated. Parents should be directed to make use of the leisure hours profitably. Then they will be satisfied. Elders can mix with the society and undertake to carry out some social work for the benefit of the people.

Some advice to elders

- Elders should behave well, when they go to live with the children or grand children. They need not advise their children, unless they are consulted.
- Elders shouldn't attempt to find fault with their grand children as they are grown up, for it might create displeasure in the family.

-
- Elders can make the best use of their leisure hours in helping grand children in their studies or engage in some useful activity. They can be "Guides" to those who come to listen to them. They can even participate in community organization work.
 - They must dress themselves well and behave well in the society. Then only they will be respected and recognized by the society.
 - We must help the needy, without expecting anything in return. When we respect others, they will respect us.
 - Elders must be active and be a role model to others.

Chapter 2.1

HEALTH OF ELDERS

Getting old is not a disease. Ageism does not appear due to sickness. Biological changes lessens the normal function of the body. Namely-

1. When we become old, cells in the body including organs changes. Their functions diminishes; some cells get destroyed. Tissues become hardened and old age symptoms appear.
 - Falling of hair- It becomes grey.
 - Fat under the skin lessens and shrinks.
 - Blood vessels get hardened resulting in the damage to arteries and veins.
 - Loss of weight by 70% and the oxygen that we inhale lessens by 65%.
 - Blood that goes to the brain is decreased by 60%.
2. Since the immunity goes down, there is more chance for the onset of communicable diseases. Lungs can get affected easily – pneumonia, and kidney diseases become predominant.
3. Function of the brain can be obstructed ending up in paralysis if the blood supply to the brain is hampered.
4. In the vertebral column, as the tissues become wasted bones can break.
5. In old age, as the cells become worn out, there is likelihood of cancer setting in. But taking two litres water daily is necessary.
6. In elders, there is 70% water in the body. But in children it is usually 80%. Elders do not feel thirsty.

-
7. In most of the diseases, no early symptoms are shown. Some have died of Heart attack without showing symptoms.

Patient feel that some of the symptoms are due to old age and neglect treatment. Therefore it is advisable to identify the diseases at an early stage for treatments.

Examinations to undergo in old age

<u>Examination</u>	<u>Diseases identified</u>
1. Screening for hypertension	Hypertension
2. Urine test	Diabetes, kidney diseases
3. X'ray, E.C.G	Heart, lung diseases
4. Blood (Hemoglobin)	Anaemia
5. Eye-Tests	Cataract/Glycoma
6. Exam. of faeces	Worms, cancer
7. Breast Examination	for Breast cancer
8. Thyroid	Diseases of thyroid
9. Prostrate	Inflammation and cancer

Other abnormalities in old age

1. Decreasing of eye sight.
2. Hearing ability drops.
3. Diseases of the joints.
4. Oral health problems – dental caries, gum diseases.
5. Skin diseases.
6. Rheumatic arthritis.
7. Malnutrition , over nutrition, obesity.

Other problems

1. Speech defects, defect in articulation, unable to remember places, time etc. Unable to identify persons, degeneration etc.,
2. Continuous use of drugs for hypertension, insomnia, arthritis might cause confusion of mind.
3. Instability.

1/3 of over 65 years age group are subject to fall at least once a year, due to instability. Mostly they suffer from short of vision, hard of hearing, difficulty of sleeping during night. Use of medicines for other diseases are some of the cause of instability.

4. Addiction of liquor and drugs.
5. Immobility – become diseased and bed-ridden on account of serious illness or accidents. Side effects of drugs used continuously for mental illnesses, can also cause immobility. Wounds can appear on the back side for those who are in bed for a longer period. Lung diseases can occur if they stay inside a room indefinitely. Bones too can get weakened as they do not move about freely. A healthy person can sleep for about 6 hours without any disturbance.

6. In continence.

Owing to many reasons, one passes urine, without one's knowledge. Inflammation of the prostrate and infection of the urethra are the main causes. Use of excessive liquor and heart diseases can contribute to this condition. Elders must be encouraged to follow these advices.

- Encourage to urinate frequently in full.

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- If they are unable to go to the bathroom, arrangements to be made to urinate from inside the room.

7. Constipation

Among the problem of elders, constipation is one. Some cannot defecate for days together (3-4 days). The following instructions are beneficial:

- Elders should stay active. Regular exercise is very necessary – especially walking.
- Consumption of fruits and vegetables is inevitable. In our daily diet the above items have to be included. Food containing dietary fibre is important to prevent constipation.
- Intake of adequate quantity of water is important.
- You shouldn't postpone defecation when you get the feeling of emptying.
- Devote more time to complete the defecation.
- Not to use drugs for constipation.
- Consult a doctor, if the condition prolongs.

8. Malnutrition

The food we eat must contain all the nutrients proportionately (Balanced diet). On an average 1200-1500 kcal is adequate for an elderly person. But for an adolescent 1750-2000 kcal is very essential. Malnutrition sets in when the required amount is not obtained.

Reasons for not obtaining the required amount.

- Feeling of taste lessens in elders.
- Inability to feel the smell of food.

-
- Unable to masticate the food thoroughly due to dental problems.
 - Unable to eat due to stress and loneliness.
 - Addicted to liquor and loss of appetite.
 - Unable to get varieties due to economic problems. Bodily functions can be affected due to the deficiency of Vitamin B – namely: Niyacin, Riboflavin, Thyamine – B12, and Vitamin D deficiency due to non exposure of the body to sunlight. Bones can become slender due to calcium deficiency.

9. Increase of body weight - obesity

To keep physically fit, we must do exercise. In affluent society people live mostly in cities without doing any work. There is a tendency for the increase of body weight which might lead to obesity. They find it difficult to move about. Unable to walk long distances. They become prone to diseases of heart, hypertension, diabetes, strokes etc. It is always better that elders take more vegetables, leafy vegetables and fruits. It is better to avoid fatty foods and fried foods.

10. Hypertension

Among elders hypertension is a common problem. Although they have this problem, they do not show the symptoms. Therefore those who are above sixty years must compulsorily check their blood pressure regularly.

Earlier symptoms are – headache, giddiness and defective vision. We can confirm the illness only by assessing the blood pressure of an individual. Continuous treatment is essential. Late symptoms are angina – pain in the chest, kidney problems, stroke or convulsion. Many elders neglect their treatment and this leads to complications. The treatment is life long.

11. Paralysis

When the blood pressure goes up, the arteries get affected. Blood can ooze out and at times blood can clot and cause paralysis.

The following signs and symptoms are observed.

- One side of the body gets weakened.
- Inability to talk.
- Difficulty in swallowing.
- Vision gets weakened.

Physiotherapeutic treatment should be given by trained personnel.

12. Diabetes

Diabetes is one of the common ailments affecting the elders. The following are the common symptoms:

- Passing of urine frequently.
- Excessive thirst.
- Loss of weight, Drowsiness.
- Loss of sensation in foot and numbness of the leg.
- Pimples behind the neck, arm pit and genital organs.
- Patient getting angry.
- Irritation in genital organs due to fungus.

The patient must be careful about the diet - balanced diet with more leafy vegetables. Use of drugs regularly- Regular exercise is very essential which promotes more insulin. Smoking and drinking has to be avoided. Irregular treatment may lead to complications.

13. Difficulty in breathing

Among the elders breathing difficulties, wheezing and continuous cough may prevail. If they get pneumonia or bronchitis at this age, it might lead to serious problems. Hence it is advisable to get medical help at an early stage. Deep breathing, yoga exercises, pranayama and meditation will be helpful to have a normal breathing. Inhaling devices can be used with medical guidance.

14. Loss of vision

- Elders must undergo eye testing and defects can be corrected at an early stage.
- Use of spectacles vide medical advice is recommended.
- Cataract is very common among elders and surgery is the only remedy for this condition.
- Glaucoma is another eye problem existing among elders. Early detection and treatment is necessary.

15. Hearing

Hearing is also a common problem among the elders. Detection of the ailment and treatment is advisable. Wax if developed should be carefully removed from the ear by medical personnel. Inserting foreign bodies inside the ear haphazardly is harmful for it might impair hearing, as the ear bone is so tender. Hearing aids can be used with medical guidance.

16. Cancer

Cancer can affect any part of the body. It's an unusual growth of cells in any part of the body. It can occur in the mouth, intestines, breast (females), lungs, uterus, anus, stomach or skin. If neglected, it becomes fatal.

a. The special symptoms are:

- Difficulty in swallowing food.
- Continuous cough.
- Pain in stomach.
- Lump in any part of the body, lesion. Incurable wounds.

b. General symptoms:

- Body becomes weak with loss of appetite.
- Tiredness and continuous fever for no reasons whatsoever.
- Drowsiness.

If the above symptoms are seen, seek medical guidance without further delay.

Preventive measures

- a. Vegetables and leaves to be included in our daily diet: whenever possible raw leafy vegetables to be taken.
- b. Vitamin 'A' and iron containing foods to be included.
- c. Avoid eating and drinking hot.
- d. Excessive salt, Coloured and fast food to be avoided.
- e. Avoid smoking and chewing.
- f. Those who work in factories should wear protective coverings or equipments.
- g. Must not exposed to dust.

Early detection of symptoms and prompt treatment is recommended as most of the cases are detected in second or late stages.

17. Preservation of teeth

It is essential to preserve our teeth – why?

- a. It is very important to chew our food – easily digestible.
- b. It is difficult to pronounce the words without teeth.
- c. A set of teeth gives beauty to the face.

Balanced diet should be taken from childhood. Brushing of teeth is necessary specially at night before going to bed. Better to reduce eating sweets and sweet products. It is the sweets that get deposited in plaque form in between the teeth. It forms acids and promotes tooth decay. Gum diseases lead to fall of teeth early in life. Smoking and chewing too contribute to loss of teeth. Dental surgeon must be consulted at least once a year, as this problem is common specially in old age.

Exercise:-

Regular exercise would prevent obesity. It is also necessary to maintain the tone of the muscles in good condition. It strengthens them and prevents them getting flabby. Exercise also helps the circulation of blood. It is also known to increase the levels HDL, the good Cholesterol.

Exercise should be carried out on a regular basis, preferably everyday; at least every other day. The type of exercise varies from age to age and from person to person; you should select the form of exercise which suits you and is enjoyable.

Chapter 2.2

ELDERS CAN AVOID FALLS

In a growing society accidents and their after effects are common. Forty percent% of the 65 years and above age group falls at least once a year. Hence, they are inflicted with wounds or abrasions. 1-6% of wounded undergo serious problems, says Dr. Fremcos Leon of the Elders Hospital in Geneva. If femur (thigh bone) or pelvis breaks, patient cannot move about and someone's help is always necessary. There will be always fear that he/she might fall.

Immediate cause of falling

Giddiness, vertigo, debility and unconsciousness are the immediate causes of falling. Prompt medical attention is needed.

Reasons for falling

- a. Nerve disorder, paralysis, parkinson's disease, shivering, poor eye sight and dementia.
- b. Poor blood circulation of heart.
- c. Weakening of lower limbs.
- d. Use of drugs for long term illnesses and use of drugs for psychiatric problems.
- e. Getting down from moving vehicles- Eg:bus.
- f. Inadequate lighting inside the rooms, bath rooms. Slippery floors etc.,

How to avoid accidents:

1. Awareness to be created among the inmates of the house regarding the safety of elders.
2. Alterations to be made in the rooms, corridors etc where elders stay or move about... wherever possible unnecessary, additional articles to be removed from the room.

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3. Additional lights to be provided.
 4. Wherever possible telephone facilities to be made available closer to their bed room.

Small test for elders. Is it dangerous if I fall?

No.	Details	Yes/No
1.	I am unable to say the reason for my fall?	
2.	I go out only once a week?	
3.	I am unable to get up from the seat where I am seated	
4.	To get up from the bed, to get up from a chair, for dressing, for washing my body, I am in need of others help.	
5.	While standing I am unable to balance.	
6.	I am finding it difficult to walk – unbalance	
7.	My both legs, the lower portion, I have a feeling that both legs are lifeless or unable to move.	
8.	I am finding it difficult to see the object just in front of me or what is on the ground.	
9.	I am using sleeping tablets, drugs for psychiatric illness or drugs for intoxication.	
10.	I am addicted to liquor.	
11.	I feel that I may fall down from the mattress or inside the room with inadequate light or while walking up stairs.	
12.	I have a fear that I may fall anywhere.	

Remarks.

1. If your answer for the first question is 'yes' there are possibilities that you might fall down. Hence, you are requested to be very careful about your own safety.
Ref: World health magazine – January 2006.

Beaware of the following precautions:

- While we travel in a car, we have to wear "seat belts" and this is compulsory in foreign countries. It gives ample protection to the travellers.
1. As elders we have to keep our body fit. Regular exercise is essential to keep our body and mind maintaining equilibrium.
 2. Keeping ourselves occupied will enhance, our self confidence.
 3. We must keep close contact with the neighbours and society and it promotes intimacy and contentment.
 4. Elders must maintain their body weight. Over weight people who do not walk or do any activities normally meet with accidents. They must take a balanced diet with more leafy vegetables and fruits.
 5. Remove dangerous environment (slippery/dark) within the house and outside. It is in the bathroom that accidents happen often. Wherever possible handles have to be fixed enabling the elders to move safely.
 6. Light and ventilation to be adequately provided for rooms.
 7. Upstair building – steps and its borders to be clearly marked. It will help the elders to climb confidently. It is a better exercise for them to climb the steps.
 8. Avoid using sleeping tablets as far as possible.
 9. Elders should not climb upon chairs, tables or ladders.
 10. Some have become slave to drugs. Counselling and guidance is essential to get over addiction.

Home accidents

1. One should not be allowed to smoke inside the house. It's always dangerous.
2. We must wear fire proof garments as far as possible (avoid using loose clothes).
3. Doors to be provided with good locks and freely opened during an emergency.
4. Floors must be free from dampness or moisture.
5. Elders should wear suitable foot wears. Ladies must avoid high heeled slippers.
6. Bottle lamps should not be used in houses.
7. Bright light must be made available at the door steps. (entrance).
8. Combustible material and insecticides to be kept away from houses.

Safety of the kitchen

1. In the almyrah or meat safe, food items to be arranged in an orderly manner at eye sight level of elders.
2. Food items must be neatly arranged inside the refrigerator, so that they can be removed easily.
3. Sharp knives to be kept away from the reach of children.
4. There should be sufficient light and ventilation to the kitchen.
5. Keep the electrical items safely inside the kitchen.
6. If telephone facilities are available have the telephone numbers displayed in a permanent place inside the kitchen.

INDIGESTION

It is a common problem prevailing among the elders. When we take oily or hot food or when we consume more food, indigestion may take place. A smarting sensation down the sternum is the usual sign of indigestion. The food that enters the stomach is again pushed into the oesophagus resulting in the smarting sensation. Further, because of the air stuck inside can cause this problem. Pain in the shoulders and chest also may happen due to indigestion.

Preventive measures

- Avoid taking fried and smarting food, fatty foods, short eats fried in oil, coffee and acidic foods.
- Smoking also can cause indigestion.
- Over weight, eating fast (within 5-7 mts), stress and wearing tight belts can also create this problem.
- Devote at least 15 minutes for taking a meal.
- Avoid sleeping immediately after having a meal.
- Food must be taken in smaller quantities.
- Using straws for taking soft drinks to be avoided.

Indigestion is a sign for ailments like gastritis, ulcers and cancer.

Chapter 2.4

BACK ACHE

Back ache is another problem faced by elders. About 90% of elders get affected at some stage. Sometimes pain starts from pelvis and travels towards the lower extremities – legs. It is natural that back muscles get weakened during old age. Backache can happen due to excess work to the muscles column consisting of bones, muscles and cartilages.

Predisposing causes are as follows:

- Fall and wounds that follows.
- Sudden movement and bending.
- Carrying of overweight by fits and starts.
- Muscular strain in the lower abdomen due to over work.

Swelling of joints

When we become old, the tender bones around the spine get wasted. Function of the disc too becomes weak. Normally these disc act as protective shield. Sometimes, its joints can get inflammed rubbing each other creating pain at the site. Backache also can occur due to urinary infection or womb complications.

Gradually when ageing sets in, even bones of the spinal column get wasted. Sometimes the bones can break as they become delicate. There may be pain in the legs. Such persons should not lift weights. They must rest at least 2-3 days till the pain subsides.

Fomentation in 15-20 minutes interval at the affected area is helpful with hot water. It must be followed by cold water at the same site. This process must be repeated.

Recommended precautions:

1. When we want to bend or lift any weight, we have to bend our knees and make use of our legs. This would give relief to the spine.
2. Improper bending or lifting can bring harmful effects.
3. Do not turn your back suddenly. If you want to catch something.
4. Getting seated for a long time is not advisable. Avoid driving a vehicle for a long time.
5. Always maintain your posture, while reading a book or watching T.V.
6. Avoid sleeping face downward.
7. While sleeping, keep your spine straight, without turning sideways, keep a thin pillow underneath to avoid pressure to the spine.
8. Use a wooden bed or a hard mattress for sleeping.
9. Maintain your body weight – B.M.I formula.
10. Walking is the best for all types of elders to keep fit and active.

Chapter 2.5

LEG PAIN

Leg pain is also a common problem among the elders. People suffering from diabetes, hypertension, smoking, obesity etc. are normally subject to pain in the leg. This condition occurs for the most part among the sedentary workers to whom the blood circulation to the legs is not satisfactorily taking place.

Signs and symptoms:

- a. Pain extending for a few minutes without any reason similar to sprain.
- b. Sometimes the victim gets up during the night due to muscular (cramp) pain.
- c. This can happen by using certain diuretic drugs.
- d. Lessening blood supply to the legs also can cause this problem. Sometimes wounds appear in the legs due to lack of blood circulation especially in diabetes patients. Due to unavoidable circumstances amputations of legs can take place.

Preventive methods:

- a. If the pain occurs at nights in the leg, make an attempt to stand for a few minutes and then give a massage to the affected site.
- b. Consult a doctor. If using diuretic drugs.
- c. The best medicine for this condition is exercise, ideal being walking. During a week an elderly person must walk for five days for a minimum period of 30 minutes. Whenever possible they must use steps instead of lifts. They must walk short distances instead of using vehicles.
- If the patient is bed ridden for a longer period, every hour he or she must move his/her leg up and down.

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- The foot must be turned clockwise and anti-clockwise (both) daily.
 - You must bend the knees and raise the leg up and down daily for a few minutes.

Neck pain

This is very common among the elders over 70 years about 85% of elders are affected by this condition.

- The joint swelling occurs when the discs situated around the bones along the spine in the neck gets weakened.
- Owing to this there is a tendency for the bones getting rubbed with each other. Due to the muscular strain resulting from the normal movement, the pain can appear in the neck, just behind the head. Sometimes this happens along with headache, felt usually in the morning hours, as soon as you get up from the bed. At times this condition occurs while you travel long distances or sit in one place for a longer period.

Precaution for neck pain

- During the day time, relax for a short period or relax in an arm-chair, giving support to the head.
- If you rest for a longer period you may develop an acute pain.
- You must avoid sleeping face down-wards.

To reduce the pain

Cold formentation is followed hot by formentation repeated for about twenty minutes.

CARING THE MENTAL HEALTH OF ELDERS

1. Good family relationship is very essential for the betterment of mental health of elders. If there is quarrel, misunderstanding or argument among the members or neighbours the inter relationship will get hindered. Therefore, it is important that we should always build up better relationship among the family members.
2. We must always develop the skill to differ graciously with members of the family and neighbours.
3. If we keep company with people of good understanding and better behaviors, we will be able to lead a peaceful life.

Family is a sacred temple

When all the family members, have a good understanding among them, it can be compared to a temple. It is constructed on a foundation of trust and faith. We always expect a cordial relationship between the husband and wife in a family. Lack of understanding and bitterness, between them would simply ruin the family life. Deep rooted wounds cannot be easily healed.

Reasons for family relationship getting affected

- Whenever misunderstanding creeps in between husband and wife, the family relationship gets affected. Use of unhealthy language brings about indescribable calamity among the family members.

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- Children leave the parents and settling abroad. Separation anxiety and feeling of loneliness among parents can prevail.
 - When the parents get older, the children's negligence to look after them, even though they lead a comfortable living.
 - The children living abroad sometimes for their own convenience, divide their parents and make them to live separately. As a result, they lead miserable life with loneliness and anxiety. Children must understand and whenever possible make arrangements to help the parents to live under one roof. It may be in their native soil or abroad wherever, they are living. In old age, specially it is very helpful, if they can live together, attend and care each other.

Ways and means to overcome problems.

- Husband and wife in their old age must have discussions with open mind which will help them to lead a contented life. If not they become suspicious with each other, then the life would become stale. It also might lead to an attempt of a suicide.
- Due to prolonged stress, they might become a target for non-communicable diseases – skin diseases or respiratory diseases (Eg. Asthma).
- A feeling of emptiness, hatred in having a peaceful life and unhealthy relationship are the other outcome.
- We must build good rapport within the family circle and with neighbours and relations.
- Husband, wife and children should be faithful among themselves. If father and mother lead a faithful and sincere life, they will become a role model to their children.

Children will follow their footsteps and they will be happy and faithful with each other. They will be able to develop a better and cordial relationship with the neighbours.

- Our friendship with the learned (Good understanding and exemplary behaviour) would grow leaps and bounds; Just like a book giving pleasure as we read it over and over.
- We must cultivate the habit of building good relationship with friends and relations.
- We must always build up our skill to listen to their grievances. Normally we always talk, but we don't listen. It is always necessary to actively listen to them. It builds confidence with person who is listening. In a way, we are in a position to share their grief and loneliness. It helps to build better understanding and friendship.
- Wherever necessary, we must always lend a helping hand.

Other related problems of elders

1. Inability to have a simple (better) balanced diet.
2. They might become a victim to anaemia or malnutrition.
3. Head injuries.
4. Deficiency of iodine, problem of Thyroid.
5. Vitamin deficiencies (Vit A,B, or D or C).
6. Complication of taking drugs for other illnesses.
7. Unable to swallow meals.
8. Dental caries. Gum diseases etc.,

We must be able to identify these abnormalities at an early stage and obtain medical attention. We should not postpone as it is happening normally during old age. If we neglect they will become depressed due to these physical conditions.

The reasons for stress and mental unbalancing

1. Displacement from our native soil, our homes.
2. Loss of properties and accumulated wealth.
3. Unable to return home due to security reasons.
4. Wounded, loss of eye sight or limbs.
5. Loss of life partner/ children.
6. Unable to trace children /husband/wife.
7. Sexual abuse/specially when displaced from permanent residences.
8. Loss of employment / not being occupied. Unable to get suitable work.
9. Grown up children, (especially girls) unable to give them in marriage. Anxiety or depression .
10. Illnesses – unable to get proper treatment. Difficulty in getting assistance to get appropriate treatment.
11. It leads to insomnia (sleeping difficulties) – unable to sleep during night, head ache, unable to concentrate, feeling of loneliness, emptiness, fear and feeling of suicide attempt, unable to take normal diet etc. Social workers, health care workers and close relations to be aware of the problems of elders and extend a helping hand in providing the basic needs, care, attention and security in their later stage of life. Members of the family and the community (especially the leaders) has a responsibility to look after them, as they were helping that community to lead a useful comfortable life.

SUGGESTION TO IMPROVE THE MEMORY OF ELDERS

1. Always be vigilant on important items or events

Awareness is very important for keeping in memory. When we explain an event or idea, it is always better to explain with a sketch or map, then it is easier to keep in our memory.

Chinese Proverbs

If I hear I forget,
If I see I remember,
If I do I know,

If I want to remember an idea, I must concentrate on that particular subject. We must avoid in handling too many activities during a particular time.

Eg. Attending to accounts while listening radio.

Listening to telephone, while driving.

Having meals while watching T.V.

It will help you to deal with various activities without any hindrance.

2. We must avoid doing different activities

- a. Eg. While using gas cooker, we shouldn't get involved in another activity. If you want to attend to some other work you must stop the cooker and proceed to the other work.
- b. We must keep important items on a particular place / spot. Eg. Keeping our keys of the gates, keeping the spectacles etc.,

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- c. Keep box of matches, candles etc in a particular spot so that any member of the family will be able to collect it during an emergency (failure of electricity).
3. We must be orderly at all times. Many elders are victims for non communicable diseases – Diabetes. Hypertension, asthma, depression etc.. It needs life long treatment . We must take medicines in the morning as well as in the evening. At times we forget to take drugs. It is a must that medicines should be taken at regular intervals according to prescription.

Hence

- a. Drugs to be taken under supervision by the inmates of the house or it must be given by a family member.
- Or it must be kept on a particular place so that it can be taken after an activity. (Make the drugs available in dining table) so that the individual can take them after meals.
 - Telephone numbers and important letters must be kept on a particular place (always).
 - Prepare a check list daily of important events on a priority basis. (Wedding, important events, birthdays etc.)
- b. If we are getting ready to deliver a talk/ important events.
- ❖ We must write them in detail.
 - ❖ It must be arranged in a sequence (logical).
 - ❖ Important items to be underlined.
 - ❖ You must read it few times, so that you can deliver it comfortably.
4. We must allocate time for relaxing; During that time we can concentrate on a particular thing. It enriches our

memory. When we are tired or under stress, we won't be able to keep every item in our memory.

Your children

Your children are not your children,
They are the sons and daughters of life's longing for itself.
They come through you but not from you,
and though they are with you yet they belong not to you.
You give them your love but not your thoughts,
for they have their own thoughts.
You may house their bodies, but not their souls
for their souls dwells in their house of tomorrow,
which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams.
You may strive to be like them, but seek not to
make them like you.
For Life goes not backward nor tarries with yesterday.

-Kahlil Gibran

LONELINESS IN OLD AGE

Old age is part of life of an individual. In happy married life, husband and wife live for long periods together, 40-60 years etc. One is following the other in every events like a shadow and one day or other they will have to leave each other. In this circumstance male or female may get a feeling of grief that cannot be put in words.

If the particular individual is in bed for a long period due to illness the family members will be in a mood to wish death. In certain instances there may be family disputes. At times husband and wife may get separated or divorced, they may not get an intense feeling of grief.

But if the couple have had a contented and happy married life, the person who was surviving would have an intense grief for a longer period. She will not have a peaceful sleep, difficulty in having meals and finding it extremely difficult to face others and also difficult to concentrate. He /she might get a feeling of emptiness. She might get a feeling of loneliness too. If this condition prolongs, the physical and psychological health of the individual might deteriorate to the low level. Hence we must be able to understand the coping mechanism to face this type of tragic circumstance. They are:

1. Grief shared alleviates the pain:

A person who is grieving may find it difficult to express his/her feeling in words. But if friends, relation or close associates extend a helping hand by getting closer, she might weep loudly. But unfortunately the close associates often obstruct the individual to cry loudly. But in many instances close relations keep away. It is always advisable to encourage the individual to cry openly to ease the pain of mind.

2. To develop the skill of listening actively:

The person who has suffered the loss will always do well to open up her deep rooted feelings. We must create an environment – build up good rapport to enable the individual to open up her suffering. By expressing openly the individual will be relieved of her pain. We must be a facilitator in listening to the individual. We should not probe any incident but facilitate to express her deep rooted pain of mind.

3. Observing Grief for particular period:

Among the Hindus it is a custom to observe the rites for a period of 31 days with religious significance. During this period, the relations, and close associates visit the house regularly; prepare meals in their homes and make same available. In a way they stay with family members and help them to ease their pain.

4. In some families they will find it difficult to express their feelings immediately. They will be able to express their grief later.

5. There are instances the affected person repeat the same story over and over again. But we must have the patience to listen to it and this will help him to express his deep rooted agony. It is a process of healing. It is very difficult to understand the mind of the grieving individual.

In Tamil Language there is a saying:

“Only a person who has lost the life partner, will understand the gravity of losing another individual.” The children, relations or grand children will not be able to understand this.

Chapter 4.1

SOCIAL RELATIONSHIP IN CARING OF ELDERS

Integration with the society

An individual is part and parcel of society. The life of a person is inter related with the family and the community. If we have difference of opinion within the family as well as in neighborhood, it is very difficult to have a peaceful life. The family relationship is built on an understanding of inter relationship with the husband and wife and other family members.

Relationship with the environment

Health of the individual is depending on the environment in which he is living. The habit and behaviour of individual is depending on the environment like the taste of water. If the soil is brackish, the water too would be brackish. When the water is contaminated (depending on the environment) people living in the area will easily get the infection of bowel diseases. (Like dysentery, typhoid fever, diarrhoea, polio etc.) Hence maintaining the sanitation of environments is very important.

Our life depends on the environment

Our knowledge, attitude and behaviour are built up according to the social pattern of the society. Our belief, practices, traditions, languages and even the way we conduct ourselves depends on the social environment. If

we develop unhealthy practices, communicable diseases, as well as non-communicable diseases can occur depending on our behaviour.

Eg. Smoking, taking alcohol or drugs is depending on the environment and the people with whom we associate.

Our cultural practices, religious belief, customs, tradition and manners are also based on the environment.

Participation of the community in caring the elders in a society. The following are involved in providing a better care for elders in our society.

- a. Neighbours, friends and relations.
- b. Institutions of worship, religious leaders like Rev.Father, Rev.Sister, Sathiya Seva sangam, Chinmaya Mission, Rama Krishna Mission, Mariyayin chennai.
- c. Community organizations and welfare societies and their social workers, including community leaders.
- d. Govt. Institutional staff and Volunteers of Non Governmental Institutions.

Action to be taken to provide basic skills and attending to the needs of elders; people who are bed ridden, patients who are taking life long treatment for illnesses like diabetes, hypertension, depression, asthma etc.

The importance of social relationship

Cordial relationship with the neighbours is very important. The elders easily fall a victim to loneliness and isolation. The community has a big role to play actively involve them in utilising their life long experiences for the betterment of the community in the field of education, medical care, progress in developing the community etc. Elders must be encouraged to participate in religious, social events and other important activities.

By keeping company with elders, we will be able to lead a life of contentment and of useful service to the needy. We also must meet the elders who live alone and be of some help depending on the needs of the individual.

METHODS OF HELPING ELDERS

Elders whoever they may be must be respected

He/she may be fragile, not steady or may be without any body's help. So, it's our responsibility or duty to help them without expecting anything in return. Thereby we become contented. Normally we don't go and help others. But expect others to help us when there is a need. But without expectation we must help the neighbours or relations. In doing so the people to whom we are helping will be waiting for an opportunity to help us in return. For example he may have lost his/her vision due to cataract. They need medical care.

It is our duty to identify this type of abnormality at the initial stage and refer them for appropriate treatment. If possible we can take them to the medical institution for treatment.

1. Let us show patience

While we care and attend to these helpless elders they become pleased and faithful. They regard and respect us and their blessing reach us. What happens to others today, can happen to us tomorrow. Therefore we should show empathy for the aged, retarded and deformed and try to provide at least the basic needs with community participation.

2. Let us listen to them actively

Most of the time, they are alone, especially when they are bed ridden or unable to move without someone's help. They may like to express their suppressed feelings. Hence the care givers and friends who visit them have a big role to play in actively listening to their needs. By listening we will be able to share their suppressed

feelings, thereby their burden is halved. We must develop the skill to be patience.

Those who get angry suddenly will be subjected to palpitation, hypertension, ulcers, skin rashes etc. Hence the care givers has a big responsibility to look after the elders in a polite manner.

3. Let us show sympathy

Some of them are suffering from terminal illness like cancer; some are bed ridden, unable to move about freely. Some have lost their life partner and suffer from separation anxiety. Some are economically handicapped and are unable to carry on their day to day life. The care givers must be polite and cordial in attending to their daily needs. In our day to day life, we always find fault with others and try to give instructions. No one is happy when we find fault in them. We must appreciate the good aspects in their life and try to persuade them to follow good precepts.

4. Let us integrate the elders in our normal work

Most of the elders are neglected and spend their time with a feeling of loneliness. Elders are experienced people possess ample life long experiences. They are useful to the community at large. We must assess the needs of the community and make use of these talented people for the betterment of the community in the field of agriculture, education, health care and other related fields. At one time, he was the chief occupant (leader) of the family. Now because of his old age, he is neglected. It is rather a pitiable situation and they are led to think that they are no more useful to the community and this type of thought can even attempt them to end their life. They may develop a feeling thus 'what is the use my life?'

Therefore, they must be given adequate care and a place of pride in the society. Elders are generally good advisors when they are consulted while in making important decisions. They will develop a liking in their life.

5. Let us be helpful in practical ways

Let us care and love them in our day to day activities. Let us be considerate for the feeling of neighbours, relations and friends. When we have things in plenty – specially food, clothing etc. we must have positive attitude to share them with others (poor and unfortunate people). But most of us, don't care them and ignore them. In some families, they have plenty of food, but they don't have the positive attitude to share a piece or handful to the unfortunate needy. But on the next day they throw the excess food and rotten fruits into a dust bin. Sharing of food and liberal thinking must be inculcated during childhood. To grow this in attitude, the parents must set an example to the children. We must entertain and enjoy with them.

After all we must be considerate for the feeling and welfare of others. In addition to this, we must make it a point to pray for others.

6. Be courteous to others

We must respect the elders. Some neglect their parents and spend money to gain their own popularity. It's not going to bring any reward. Hence be courteous to others and reward will be at hand. "Anpey Sivam"

- God is love

ELDERS AND SPIRITUAL HEALTH

If we want to be happy and contented in life, we must follow the spiritual path. All the religions (Hinduism, Christianity, Buddhism or Islam) in our country have developed their activities, to guide the General Public to lead a peaceful life by concentration of mind. If we are unable to concentrate we may develop illnesses like, palpitation, hypertension, diabetes, asthma or anxiety. The people may be highly educated or may have enough wealth but if they have family disputes, they may not have peace of mind.

Hence we must focus our attention to spirituality from childhood. The elders have suffered to the maximum during the last 30 years in our country due to displacement within our country or outside our borders. Many elders are alone without the help of children. Hence we must develop a favourable attitude and skill to improve spiritual health in our normal life.

Advantages of spiritual health:

- a. We will be able to enhance the ability to concentrate
- b. Unwanted ideas, feelings will be rooted out from sub conscious mind.
- c. To develop the skills to be patience by observing silence.
- d. We will develop a favourable behaviour to "Differ graciously".
- e. Ensure a liking to love the neighbours.
- f. Will be able to develop a 'Trained eye' to identify the suffering of poor people, disabled people (no eye sight, unable to move about, bed ridden etc.) will develop a liking to care the elders – referring and be of help to them for early treatment.
- g. Will develop the skill to serve these elderly(attending, serving, caring,actively listening, financial assistance etc.).

Ways of developing spiritual health

1. Give due recognition to father, mother, teacher (Guru).
2. Show love on all living beings- including birds, animals etc.. This will create a feeling of brotherhood.
3. The work we perform is next to God. We must be sincere and faithful in any type of work which we undertake.
4. Visit to temple, mosque, church or vihara – worship will give self satisfaction/ contentment. Group singing, namas maranaya, prayer, jepam, (repetition of certain mantra) fasting , observe silence (not talking anything with any one during the whole day or part of the day (4-6hrs).
5. Deep breathing- by performing this activity, the body and mind will ease and uphold a calm and soothing attitude.
6. Performing yoga exercises. It will help to lead a contented life.
7. Pronouncing 'Om karm' or manthiras.

'AUM' say this prayer slowly and deeply for 21 times (Om mmm...m). It must be a joint effort of tongue, heart and mind. Similarly repeat them.

'Om Namasivaya sivaya nama om mm'

'Omm... namooo bagawathe.... ee'

'Om.... namo..... narayana.... ya'

When we contemplate in this manner regularly, we enjoy 'peace of mind – controlling of senses become easy. Egoism disappears, and attitude in loving others grow more and more.

CARING THE NEEDS OF ELDERS

It is our responsibility and duty to look after and attend to their needs in our family and in the community. Remember that our elders have sacrificed their life for the sake of the children and family as well as the society. Now they are unable to work or move about. Hence we shouldn't hate them saying that they are no longer useful. The elders must keep their time fully occupied and keep themselves active. If they feel lazy and confined to bed or unoccupied they will become sick and develop boredom.

How to lead a happy life

It is God's will that we live peacefully and render our services to others. Sharing our talents and experiences with others is very important. It is a pity and sorrowful if we don't share our expertise, as we develop the skills through community efforts and actions. Elders may have their own weaknesses, however, they must be honoured for their experiences and talents.

Caring the needs of elders

1. Various types of ailments may be their long term problem. Diseases can occur simultaneously.
2. Those problems identified and untreated in young may create problems in old age.
3. Unable to face stress of different types; (separation anxiety; feeling of loneliness). As children are far away from native soil or becoming a widow or widower especially in young age due to war; (as a result) succumbing to depression and other mental diseases.
4. Poor income, and unable to meet the daily needs.
5. Bed ridden and lack of caring by the children and family members.

General problems faced by elders

1. Although they have many talents and experiences there is no avenue to open or to exhibit them.
2. Allocate many responsibilities – looking after the grand children for the whole day. In addition to look into the daily needs of the house (cooking, washing etc). With all this, finding fault for unnecessary dealings, addressing them in irresponsible manner. Approach them in an inhuman way that they get wounded or disturbed psychologically.
3. Sometimes food, clothing and shelter are not properly provided.
4. Personal hygiene is not maintained satisfactorily.
5. Elders are not consulted in decision making, at least during important activities.
6. Allocate living accommodation either in congestion or in the back yard.
7. Unhealthy remarks of youngsters. This makes them uncomfortable and uneasy.
8. Destroying or hiding their belongings.
9. Unable to go about and attend festivals or important events. Sometimes, there is no escort to take them.
10. Unable to maintain close relationship. Hatred towards those with whom the elders move closely, especially children, grand children and close relations.

Coping mechanisms to face problems

1. Awareness to be created at community level on the 'need for caring elders.'
2. Rendering a healthy hand, executing actively by means of promoting elders care.
3. Keep active and fully occupied – time management is very necessary

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4. Walking daily at least for 30-40 minutes, Lot of problems can be solved by doing regular exercise. It helps to maintain the muscles, joints in good condition.
 5. Planning the daily activities – Eg. Morning activities, personal hygiene, taking meals at the proper time, recreations, social work etc.,
 6. Selection of diet suitable to them (balanced diet) with more fruits and leafy vegetables.

The need for screening (medically)

Elders are advised to undergo medical checkup at least once in two months.

Organs	Changes
➤ Blood vessels, heart	cholesterol disorders, blood pressure, blood sugar, blocking of blood vessels, pancreas
➤ Pancreas	Blood Sugar
➤ Lungs	lessening of breathing capacity
➤ Digestive	Difficulty in digestion, slowing of absorption, constipation
➤ Brain and nerves	forgetfulness, lack of concentration,
➤ Muscles, joints and bones	weakening of muscles and bones wastage of joints
➤ Skin hair	shrinking of skin, fall of hair, grey hair
➤ Sense organs(eyes,ears)	Defective
➤ Resistance – Immunity	Defective, infectious diseases,

Source: Prof.Daya Somasundaram in Mental health of Tamil community.

It is advisable to commence treatment as soon as it is identified. Hypertension, Diabetes, inflammation of joints etc, usually the treatment is life long.

Follow-up treatment of non-communicable diseases.

Among the elders diabetes, hypertension, thyroid are common problems and treatment is life long. But many of the elders neglect their daily treatment. It leads to severe complications.

Caring of elders – long term

1. **Domicilliory treatment** – by family members, paid workers or social worker.

2. **Day Care Centre**

Voluntary organisations, N.G.O and religious Institutions are actively involved in looking after the elders during day time. They register in the morning and return in the evening. Preference is given to those who have no one to look after. Food, shelter and recreation facilities are available. The Government is giving assistance to maintain these centres.

3. **Elder's home**

a. **Run by Government Institutions**

These homes are conducted at Kaithady, Anuradapura and Minuwangoda. Both males and females are admitted on priority basis through Divisional Secretariat. Applications to be forwarded through Grama Sevaka and submitted to Social Service Officer attached to the Divisional secretariat.

b. Run by N.G.O or Religious organisations

Application for admission to be forwarded through the respective GramaSevaka, Div.Secretariat to the Head of the Organisation. The elders will be admitted to the institution on a priority basis. The elders will be looked after by the respective Institutions.

c. Institutions run by individuals

In Colombo and other main cities elders homes are being established and run by private individuals. Fees are levied according to facilities provided. Most of those who live abroad leave their parents in these homes.

Facilities provided by other voluntary organizations

Rotary club, Lions clubs, Red Cross society, Refugees Rehabilitation Centres, N.G.O, provide medical facilities and other financial assistance to the needy on a priority basis.

Eye medical camps are being conducted from time to time by Sai Seva Sangam, Young Muslims Association, on a regular basis at community level for the needy, free of charge on a priority basis.

Helpage Sri Lanka

It is a non – governmental organization functioning in Sri Lanka in the following address.

102, Paramananda Mawatte, Ratharapitiya,
Borelesgamuwa, Sri Lanka,
T.P. 2503752, 3 or 4.
Fax No. 2811147.

This organization functions with the financial assistance provided by the International Helpage. The following services are provided by this organization.

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1. Conduct programmes at District and National level to create awareness for caring the Elders with dignity.
 2. Training of leaders and social workers on 'caring the elders' at community level.
 3. Training of volunteers/ social workers. It is a two weeks programme conducted on 'caring elders' at community level in their homes or elders homes. The applicants are selected by the respective Divisional Secretariat with the assistance of social services officer. They are sent to the Head quarters for this two weeks training. Transport, food and lodging are provided free of charge by this N.G.O.
 4. Residential courses are also conducted for managers, subordinate staff, care takers and for social workers of Elders Homes with a view to provide a better care for the Elders.
 5. **Help to formulate plans for caring the elders at District and grass root level.** Helpage, Sri Lanka provide guidance for obtaining funds from outside our country with a view to executing the plans in favour of caring the elders.

The Role of Voluntary organizations in caring Elders.

The Voluntary Organisations functioning at village level, along with other activities will be able to give a helping hand in providing care for the helpless Elders. The Divisional secretary, Social Services Officer and Grama Niladari can guide the social workers and welfare officers in providing necessary skills and the basic care to the needy.

They are:

- a. Basic training on caring elders at grass root level.
- b. Identification of elders (65 yrs and over) and look into their urgent needs. Diseases of ill health (abnormalities) are detected at an early stage – viz. Eye care, Dental care, Psychological care (Depression, anxiety, stress disorder) and refer them for appropriate treatments.
- c. Providing patient care - help in continuing their treatment for non-communicable diseases.
- d. Home visits to the Elders and provide basic care – primary health care, personal hygiene.
- e. Be a good listener – be friendly.
- f. Accompany them to the Medical clinics and be of assistance (Monthly visits).

CARING OF ELDERS – ALTERNATIVE METHODS OF APPROACHING THE PROBLEMS

1. Training of Elders on income ensuring ventures.

Not only we get adequate income, but also keep ourselves actively occupied in old age. Depending on the available resources in the particular area/division, we can get basic training and develop the skills in the field of agriculture, budding and crafting of plants, other handicrafts like painting etc.,

Marimuttu 79yrs with a background skills in agriculture having obtained the basic training in budding plants like mango, lime, brinjals, oranges, wood apple, and varieties of roses, is able to earn a reasonable income in selling the crafted plants. In addition to this he is able to plant papaya, kathurumurunga (Akaththy) and other varieties of plants in polythene bags and sell them at a subsidised rate with a view to helping the poor and the needy.

2. Arranging of pilgrimages and excursions to the elders who are less fortunate, specially who are living in elders home or living alone in their houses.
3. Organize programmes on a regular basis to enable the elders to share their work experiences/ achievements
 - a. Study circle
 - b. Satsangam
 - c. Seminar and discussion programmes

Community leaders, writers, Research officers, Educationist, consultants and Medical personnel to

be included in this programmes. Elders will feel that they are recognized for the services that they have rendered for the development of the community.

4. In Medical Institutions and private clinics elders are given priority for consultations to obtain the medical requirements.
5. Items produced by these elders to be exhibited in important places and in an organized exhibition. Important items used by elders to be preserved in individual home and in common places like public libraries.
6. 'Elders day' can be celebrated by voluntary organisations and welfare institutions like pensioners associations, community centres and Rural Development societies. The elders should be recognized and honoured for the selfless services rendered for the uplifting of the community.

TIME MANAGEMENT OF ELDERS

Old elders should plan their day to day activities in order to spend the time in a useful manner. Other wise the time will be wasted on eating, gossiping and sleeping. Otherwise we may find it difficult to control our five senses, and get a feeling of loneliness. We should not postpone any activity for the next day. Maintaining our health (specially the personal hygiene) is like going on a spiritual journey. There must be plan of work for a day and a check list must be prepared and it must be implemented on a priority basis. The following aspects are to be taken into consideration in planning :

1. Getting up early (in the morning) and attending to morning duties.
2. Having meals at the proper time. Dinner before 8.00 p.m.
3. They must be able to rest and relax.
4. Minimum of six hours sleep during night, and avoid sleeping during day time.
5. Thirty minutes (minimum) of walking preferably in the morning around 7 am.
6. If possible allocate time for earning any income.

To spend the leisure hours profitably

1. To share the work experiences with suitable target groups
– Education, agriculture, medical care, computer education etc.

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2. To spend the time in spiritual activities prayer, jebam, bajan, deep breathing, 'Om karam', meditation etc.,
 3. Visit relations, friends and participate in their welfare activities.
 4. Visit sick people who are unable to move about and share their feelings. Active listening and be of useful service to them in the hour of needs.
 5. Participate in cultural programmes, music, dance etc.,
 6. Watching T.V. without hindrances to the other inmate of the house.
 7. Plan the work for a day on a priority basis – check list.
 8. Let us fulfill our daily needs without depending on somebody else.
 9. Let us help others by providing services if possible financially to the needy.
 10. Let us also review what we have done during the day before going to bed.
 11. A person who is going to retire from service should plan the future as to how he could spend the rest of the time in a useful manner.

NECESSITY OF BEING ACTIVE

As elders, we must be active to lead a happy and contented life. Then only we can maintain our physical, mental social and spiritual well being

- ✓ To function independently, our muscles must be maintained well. Then only we can lead a life without any complication and without any others help.
- ✓ Being active, bone will get strengthened. Exercises will help the heart to work fast and the organs start working effectively.
- ✓ In one minute 18 litres of blood is sent to the body through the heart. Regular exercises will prevent cholesterol being deposited in the arteries. Daily walking increases HDL which is good cholesterol.
- ✓ In the city, the chances to do exercises is very limited. When there is poor circulation of blood, as a result of smarting sensation of foot, cramps in the legs appear. Some times the patient might loose sensation in the foot, cramps in the legs might occur.

Benefits of being active

1. We can freely move about independently/ honourably.
2. Energy could be obtained adequately.
3. Even we can walk about with little pain. No necessity for a walking stick. We can lead a healthy and contented life.
4. We need not depend on outside help for doing any work.
5. You can have a sound sleep without any break.

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6. If we are inactive, there is a fear that we might fall. It is true that we might find it difficult to balance while walking, if we confine to our rooms all the time.
 7. Even for sick people, walking is very necessary especially for those suffering from Diabetes, hypertension and heart diseases. To maintain our physical health, activeness is very essential. It promotes psychological wellbeing of elders and all other target groups.

Chapter 6.5

PRIME MESSAGE IN CARING

1. Let us do exercises at least 50-60 minutes daily. Walking is the best form of exercise for elders.
2. Husband and wife should be encouraged to walk together on a planned basis to maintain better relationship.
3. Visiting relations and attending to religious and cultural activities together will help to maintain a better understanding and caring between the couple in old age.
4. Praying and having meals together will bring a better understanding between the husband and wife.
5. Let us do our work in a systematic manner without any outsiders help. It promotes self confidence, satisfaction etc.,
6. We must always converse with others with an open mind. Active listening is an important skill which promotes better understanding and good friend ship.
7. We always find fault with others. Wherever possible it must be avoided at the same time we must develop the skill to appreciate the good work of others specially of our wife and children.
8. If there is a necessity to give advice and guidance, it must be done, not in the presence of others.
9. We must always choose good friends and they will be helpful in our hour of needs.
10. We must help the poor and the needy without any expectations.

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11. We must develop the habit of sharing with friends and relations within our financial means. Similarly when someone offers any gift we must accept it without any hurtful remarks.
 12. Elders must have little savings for future needs.
 13. We must share our savings and immovable properties well in advance to our children and the needy to avoid disputes and misunderstanding.
 14. Have concern for the welfare of orphans and widows and give them liberally.
 15. It is always advisable to lead a simple and contented life. (Specially meals, dress, transport etc.,).
 16. We must control our senses – anger, enmity and jealousy.
 17. We must develop the habit of praying for the welfare and happiness of friends, relations, neighbours etc.,
 18. Before going to bed, we must review the work and activities which we have done for the day.
 19. Similarly we must develop the habit to manage our time on a programme basis and prepare a check list on a priority basis.
 20. We must develop the skill to serve the sick and needy people and lonely. Swami Ramakrishnar remarked "It is always better to serve the sick and the needy, rather than doing meditation."
 21. We must attend to our daily needs without postponing them for tomorrow.
 22. Before we mend others, we must mend ourselves. Parents should be role models to their children.

Some general hints for elders

1. Elders must always take less amount of diet (half belly full).
2. Avoid eating hard food item – because the teeth might easily break.
3. We must always avoid eating fast foods – specially fried foods.
4. We must always maintain our body weight (Normal BMI 19.9-22.9) Over weight promotes non – communicable diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, heart diseases etc.
5. We must avoid sleeping during day time – during night, we must sleep at least minimum of nine hours.
6. Elders having diabetes, hypertension and heart diseases should undertake exercises as recommended by medical personnel.
7. Excessive item of clothing and other items in our home can be discarded or given over to the poor and needy.
8. Most of the elders wait in their homes and grumble that their children or friends have not visited them or made any inquiries on special days. Therefore we must plan and meet our close relatives/friends once in a way. It promotes better understanding and empathy towards each other.

PART PLAYED BY HEALTH CARE WORKERS

If we follow positive health care activities from childhood, we can face old age gracefully. Hence we must follow primary health care, as guided by the field health care workers. P.H.I; P.H.M; P.H.N attached to the respective M.O.H Division will be able to guide the general public to identify any abnormalities prevailing among the elders in the initial stage for necessary treatments.

The following aspects are included

- a. Awareness programmes about 'caring of elders' to be undertaken at community level.
- b. Health promotional programmes to be organized and implemented at community level – (viz – screening for diabetes, hypertension, cancer, malnutrition, eyesight, hearing, dental care etc.,).
- c. Treatment centre to be organized at Primary health care centre level only for elders for follow up treatment.
- d. If necessary they must be referred for further treatment to the District/ Provincial treatment centre.
- e. Training programmes for social workers, volunteers and health care workers to care for the welfare of elders to be undertaken with the guidance of M.O.H, and other related services – (social service, rural developments, cultural and spiritual developments etc.,).
- f. A separate register should be maintained for caring of elders for follow up programmes.
- g. Primary health care workers will be able to guide the elders individually during their home visits.

CARING OF ELDERS FUNCTION AND TASK OF SOCIAL WORKERS

Elders are an important target group in our society. The society is responsible for the health and wellbeing of Elders. The important tasks of social workers are as follows.

1. Avoid egoism, must maintain - good rapport with the community, irrespective of race, religion and cultural background. Thus we can maintain the relationship with the society and do a noble service to the elders.
2. The needs and problems of elders to be identified; basic data of this target group to be collected namely - name, age, sex, economic status, whether residential facilities, basic needs are available or not, health status at present – eye, hearing, dental problems, physical, mental status, medical problems and other related problems.
3. Basic training is very important for the welfare workers to perform these tasks.
4. We must be aware of the N.G.O, welfare organizations which are working at grass root level and mobilize their support for undertaking the tasks of caring the elders. The assistance of PHI, PHM, PHN, MOH, S.S.O, Grama Niladari, R.D.O, Probation and child care officers to be obtained to suit the needs of the community.
5. Awareness programmes to be carried out at grass root level to look after the elders and guide them to maintain a good health care work at community level.
6. By educating the community at village level, they will be able to identify their related health problems and seek

medical guidance. (Viz. hearing, vision, dental problems nutritional problems and other similar abnormal conditions).

7. Guide them to get financial assistance and other medical benefits from Government Departments and other related social Institution.
8. Special Medical clinics or medical camps could be organized for identifying their problems with the assistance of heads of Medical Institutions and welfare organizations.
9. Social workers can help the elders by being a link between N.G.O, Social Institution and Government officers.
10. Helping the elders to visit Medical clinics and special treatment centres for follow up treatment.
11. Helping the elders to attend to their normal activities. Viz. Yoga practices, arranging special educational programmes; Preparing low cost nutritional meals and serve them – food Demonstration programme. Attending to first aid needs.
12. Attend to patient care activities – specially diabetic patients and bed ridden patients. Special attention should be given to dole out the required amount of drugs at the appropriate time. Irregular treatment leads to complications.
13. Most of the elders are living in their houses with a feeling of loneliness. Social workers have to visit them on a regular basis and listen to their grievances-active listening is an important aspect in healing their mental stress. If necessary they can refer them to get appropriate treatments.

Chapter 6.8

QUALITIES REQUIRED FOR SOCIAL WORKERS

1. They must develop the skill to build rapport with any member of the community. They also must be able to identify and respect the feelings of elders. Empathetic understanding.
2. At any level, Social Worker must have a favourable attitude to recognize any one. It promotes better understanding in helping the needy.
3. Finding fault is very easy. It must be avoided. At the same time one must be able to appreciate the good qualities and favourable action of others.
4. Social workers must be able to manage their time profitably. Time management is very essential. Work must be planned and carried out on a priority basis.
5. We must develop a favourable attitude to care and attend to the need of elders especially those who are unable to move about and who are living alone – loneliness is a big challenge for the elders.
6. We must be able to win the confidence of elders; be sincere and trustworthy. Must be able to maintain confidentiality – without exposing what they are sharing (100% confidentiality must be maintained) It promotes better understanding.
7. Be feel free to treat every body equal. It promotes better communication and understanding.
8. Be considerate for the feeling of others and develop the skill to differ graciously.
9. Develop the willingness to help the poor and needy. At the same time, we must accept small things when they offer with a willing heart.

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10. We must develop a favourable attitude to share meals with the community members.
 11. Develop the skill to listen actively to the maximum.
 12. Social workers must be always careful in using kind words. Be polite in all dealings.
 13. We must develop self confidence to face the public.
 14. Be sincere and truthful; keep trust in others.
 15. Approach everything with divine blessings.
 16. Develop a liking to be one among them (Elders) and share their feelings with open heart.
 17. Plan discussion programmes, seminars, cultural activities involving the elders.
 18. Be a role model in carrying out the day to day activities – setting an example.
 19. Be able to mobilize the community resources and help the community to find solution to their common needs.
 20. Be able to identify the leadership pattern and plan a workable programme involving them to help the elders in handling their health needs.
 21. Be able to move closely with the community and participate in community events – be a resourceful person in the hour of need. (Participating in their joys and sorrows).
 22. Develop the skill to identify the common health problems among elders and refer them for treatment at the initial stages (trained eye).
 23. Be a link with the elders and out side agencies.
 24. Be a good educator specially in relation to health related problems.
 25. Don't seek recognition. The community will give you the maximum support for you to lead a noble /resourceful life.
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CARE OF TERMINALLY ILL AND BED RIDDEN

Diseases that occur among elders become a long term problem. Sometimes they become bed ridden. Unable to move their limbs, see, hear or organs losing their functions. In this position, patients become unable to revive from long term ailment such as paralysis, hypertension, and urinary complications (passing of urine without the knowledge of the patients)

Other problems are:

- ❖ Unable to walk about due to paralysis.
- ❖ Unable to see or unable to talk due to paralysis/hypertension.
- ❖ Parkinson disease, cancer etc. Can make the body lifeless.
- ❖ Dementia – unbalancing – inability to think or do anything by the individuals. Unable to consume their foods or carry out their normal routines and the patient has to depend on others for everything.
- ❖ If the patient is on the bed for a longer period, he or she can develop bed – sores
- ❖ Long term sores specially among the diabetes patients. Amputation of legs due to non-healing wounds. We must help these patients to attend to their normal work.

Special care is necessary at this stage

(Cardinal points to remember)

1. Feeling of loneliness.
2. Being a burden to others.

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3. Stubbornness also can prevail at times.
 4. Feeling of emptiness – unable to stay happily.
 5. Forgetfulness – unable to concentrate.
 6. Unable to move about – hence frustration.
 7. Anger – loss of confidence in himself/herself.
 8. Stress – They will find it difficult to listen to the advice of others. We must help them to profitably utilize their time.
 9. Help them to undertake suitable exercises to keep the body active/ fit.
 10. Spiritual exercises – deep breathing, jebam, namasmarana. Eg. Om..... namo narayanaya.....; Om namo bagawathe; om namasivaya – sivaya nama om. Repetition of manthiram for 108 times daily.

Note: This will help the individual to focus attention on a particular sense – breath.

- We can attend to deep breathing exercise while seated in the bed itself.
 - This will help us to develop self confidence, satisfaction and helps in concentration.
11. Healing touch will be of help for these elders-all the living beings are in need of constant love (animal, birds, including human beings). They like to touch the individuals who are caring/ attending and express their feelings. Hence the care givers must develop the skill to understand any individual empathetically.

Some important points to remember

- a. Mostly elders were leading an honourable life. They were helping not only the family members and relations, but also the general public. Hence they will have an expectation that they will be respected in their old age.
- b. Under the above circumstances the close relations or social workers must take a keen interest to visit them and look into their needs.
- c. Having lost the life partner, the place remains unfilled. There is no body to extend the mutual relationship. They will feel lonely and suffer separation anxiety and a feeling of emptiness will remain. Therefore to lead a normal life, they need someone's help. Hence it is a our duty to care these elders without any reservations.
- d. If necessary let us arrange professional counseling to get over their problem of anxiety.

Chapter 8.0

FACING DEATH WITH OPEN ARMS

Death is common to all living beings. All will die one day or other. Life on earth is transient and death is certain to everyone. There are two types of deaths.

- a. Deaths of our family members, relations and friends
- b. Our death

Death is a natural phenomenon. It is also natural that we wail and lament over the death of others. We are not going to benefit anything by weeping over the years. Only we will get affected physically and mentally. For example- when the spouse who has been living together for 40-50 years dies, his/her life becomes miserable, the loss is unbearable and irreparable. However, it has to be accepted by everyone.

1. Why we become sad over death

Most of us, are worried about a particular death due to selfish reasons. I am worried about the death of my wife because she is part of my life for the past 49 years. She has mixed in my life and shared my feelings (pleasant or unpleasant). She was my life force. Due to illness, she passed away within a month. I was able to care in her illness. With all that I am unable to bear her loss/absence. Specially during night, now I am alone in the room. In my married life, but I was not living alone at any stage. When I think the way she cared me I can only cry. I was selfish and depending on her for all assistance. It is the way in family life. Death is unavoidable and we have to accept it. After all it is a God send and in this way, we have to console ourselves. Let us do whatever possible to honour the deceased. A saying come to my memory "Worrying worries us".

We are not going to gain anything by lamenting eternally. Intelligent people will never lament. With honour accepting the death, I will be able to lead a balanced life. It is the correct step for the widower/widow to honour the departing partner in a fitting manner. It is the highest honour I can give to my life partner. Emperor Shajahan built a big tomb one of the wonders of the world (7), Taj Mahal in memory of his wife.

2. Therefore we have to prepare for his/her demise when we get old, it is certain that we go nearer the grave – the final stage of our life. Terminal illnesses, incurable disease like cancer , AIDS etc. bring death within years or few months.
3. Open conversation and the agony shared with family members.
4. We are scared to talk about the illness and death, due to our ignorance. We also get excited and make others too excited.
5. By encouraging liberal conversations, we can create a suitable environment to obtain permission from close relatives before departure.
6. If there are any expectations from the elderly, those can be fulfilled. The diseased can declare his/her last –will. Some times, the patient will not be able to express anything. But we can encourage them to express their hidden feelings. It will help them to express their long standing suppressed feelings.

In a way they will feel relaxed. It would bring in peace of mind.

<p>“Seeing Death a necessary end and will come when it comes. Julius Caesar</p>
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Death happens suddenly. It comes like a thief, they say. The victim may suffer from pain. When we give a gentle massage, to the muscles she/he may get relief. At this stage the diseased may not be able to speak. There may be difficulty in passing urine.

Breathing difficulty becomes acute and fear shown on his face. It is better to recite prayer, namasmaranya and create a solemn atmosphere.

It is always advisable to allow the individual to die at his home in the midst of relations. It is meaningless to take the patient to a hospital, at the latest stage. Hearing and speech might cease. However, by reciting religious songs, Bajans, Namasmarana, the victim may get consoled.

Healing touch

This method involves touching of the deceased hands, face, body gently. By caring we share our deep rooted love to the patient. Sometimes the patient may like to have a soothing touch by his/her better half, children and grand children. So it is left to us to help the deceased to have a peaceful journey without much agony.

Funeral ceremony

1. The close relations – wife/husband or children must have been badly hit by the bereavement, unable to cry or talk due to the shock. They may feel emptied over the irreparable loss. In some instances, the children or close relation may not get the opportunity to perform the last rites. They may feel guilty psychologically. The affected has to be consoled by close relatives and family members.

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2. Hindus observe sympathy for 31 days and carry out the necessary rituals. 'Astyhy' is taken to holy water and mixed after the religious ceremonies. Religious programmes are observed further. Christians will have a mass at the Church while Muslims perform 'Tholugai' at the Mosque.
 3. On the particular day of the month and year as a remembrance of the deceased, the members of the household conduct religious ceremonies in the presence of relations and friends.
 4. In addition to this souvenirs, periodical and printed matters are published. Memorial lectures are conducted annually. Tombs are erected in memory of the deceased and for the repose of his/her soul.

Chapter 9.0

SHALL WE REVIEW OUR HEALTH STATUS?

DETAILS	Yes/No
1. I am able to have a sound sleep	
2. I feel well balanced (no headache, able to concentrate; I don't get angry)	
3. Daily I do physical exercise (walking minimum 45-50 min)	
4. I am able to relax	
5. I am able to attend to my daily routine (works) and other activities smoothly	
6. I am able to spend the time profitably (time managed satisfactorily/ have a check list)	
7. I have many close friends who visit me regularly	
8. I am able to share my feelings openly with close friends	
9. I don't get constipated. I have normal bowel movement.	
10. Daily I include more vegetables, green leaves and fruits in my diet.	
11. I am able to maintain my body weight (BMI 19.9.-23.0 Normal)	
12. I am enjoying my sex life satisfactorily	

13.	I do not smoke	
14.	I don't take liquor under any circumstances.	
15.	Even though I am old (over 65 yrs) I feel fit to attend to my duties.	
16.	I attend to medical checkup as a routine	
17.	I take the prescribed drugs daily at the appropriate time, with correct dosage.	
18.	I don't take any medicine without doctors' advice or prescription.	
19.	I can live alone in the room (I don't feel lonely)	
20.	I am not separated from my wife/husband	
21.	I am married (widow/widower/single)	
22.	I do yoga practices/ meditation daily	
23.	I help the needy as a voluntary service/ visit at least one individual daily	
24.	I voluntarily help the needy within my means. (without asking) I feel that there is no need for saving	
25.	I am able to live happily/ without losing anything	
Total		

Note: If you are able to score more than 20 'yes' it is very good. We must have a well balanced life with the aim to score the maximum.

Annexure - 1

Love all, serve all

You seem to think that I punish you,
When I take away from you, your wordly riches.
You think of me being cruel,
When a loved one parts
And says goodbye by death
But these are only my ways to reward you,
To redirect your goals
To realize the insignificance of possessions,
To reduce and diminish your passions
You call love!
I want to swivel you away from these addiction,
That leaves you helpless
In your eccentric fantasies
Your only one true possession is 'God'
The riches of all worlds is within you-
To love all, to serve all !

Sai Darshan

Divine messages recorded by Seema M.Dewan

Annexure -2

Responsibility of Parents

When you become parents
You give your children
All your love and protection
You give them all your knowledge,
and understanding in life.
One day you hope when they grow up,
They will use this education
And will better themselves.
But when they do not rise to your expectations
You are hurt within and are deeply disappointed
You hope one day,
They will realize the importance of your words.
And be winners in all that they do
I too am your parent
And face your failures with the hope.
That one day you will realize
The importance of my words
And will rise above your humanness
And become divine

Sai Darshan

Divine messages recorded by seema M.Dewan

Annexure - 3

Wipe away your sins and earn my grace by:

1. Treating animals and birds with love.
2. Protecting the helpless.
3. Taking pity and forgiving the wicked.
4. Compassion for the physically sick and handicapped.
5. Not talking ill of others in their absence.
6. Welcoming the most unwelcome and receive them.
7. Loving those who specially criticize you.
8. Offering food to the unfortunate and hungry.
9. Sharing your riches with others.
10. Never ridiculing others' beliefs of God.
11. Forgiving and forgetting all faults.
12. Doing your duty without any complaints.
13. Staying away from those who are upset by your presence.
14. Not giving way to temper.
15. Never being envious of other's possession, situations or achievements.
16. Never betraying one's trust in you.
17. Standing up for that which is right.
18. Staying away from the untruth.
19. Carrying out every act with the knowledge of My presence.
20. Being Godward and rising above humanity and becoming divine.

Saidharshan – Recorded by Seema M.Dewan

Annexure - 4

Stress Management Techniques

If you are more sensitive to stress, it is of utmost importance that you learn stress management techniques and maintain a low – stress lifestyles.

Healthy lifestyle choices to reduce stress:

1. Enjoy exercise: Exercise increases the body's cell sensitivity to insulin and can relieve mental stress.
2. Loose weight healthily if necessary: as little as 10% reduction in body weight can improve the cells sensitivity to insulin and thus efficiency of cells to function normally.
3. Choose the best carbohydrates: Avoid refined carbohydrates and sugars and aim for whole grain breads and cereals rich in vitamins and minerals.
4. Maintain a healthy intake of fat with emphasis on the healthy oils like monounsaturated fats found in olives and olive oils, and omega -3 fatty acids found in fish and some nuts.
5. Follow a balanced varied diet and consume sweets in moderation – treat sweets as a treat rather than a common food in your daily diet.
6. Manage stress and develop good sleeping habits. Stress and inadequate sleep increase the stress hormone cortisol and thus increase our tendency to eat more and deposit more fat.
7. Take a walk. Exercise is a great stress reliever as it releases endorphins 'Happy hormones' in the brain.
8. Take a breath; learn a few breathing exercises and practice them regularly
9. Reframe your situation: Don't intensity stress situations. Try to look at things from a different prespective
10. Take a break:- Release and get some change by entertaining or pampering yourself.

Annexure - 5

Benefits of deep Breathing

There are 18 benefits namely

1. Breathing Detoxifies and releases toxins

Our body is designed to release 70% of its toxins through breathing. If I am not breathing effectively. I am not properly ridding my body of its toxins. ie other systems in my body must work overtime which could eventually lead to illness. When I exhale air from my body; I release carbon dioxide that has been passed through from my bloodstream into my lungs. Carbon dioxide is a natural waste of our body's metabolism.

2. Breathing releases tension

Think how our body feels, when I am tensed, angry, scared or stressed. It constricts. Our muscles get tight and my breathing becomes shallow. When my breathing is shallow I am not getting the amount of oxygen that our body needs.

3. Breathing relaxes the mind /body and brings clarity

Oxygenation of the brain reducing excessive anxiety levels. **Paying attention on your breathing.** Breathe slowly, deeply, and purposefully into your body. Notice any places that are tight and breathe into them. As you relax your body, you may find that the breathing brings clarity and insight to you as well.

4. Breathing Relieves Emotional problems

Breathing will help clear uneasy feelings out of your body. It promotes clear thinking and helps in promoting positive thinking.

5. **Breathing Relieves pain**

You may not realize its connection to how to think, feel, and experience life. For example, what happens to your breathing when you anticipate pain/ you probably hold your breath. Yet studies show that breathing into your pain helps to ease it.

6. **Breathing massages your organs**

The movements of the diaphragm during the deep breathing exercise massages the stomach, small intestine, liver and pancreas. The upper movement of the diaphragm also massages the heart. When you inhale air your diaphragm descends and your abdomen will expand. By this action you massage vital organs and improves circulation in them. Controlled breathing also strengthens and tones your abdominal muscles.

7. **Breathing increases muscle**

Breathing is the oxygenation process to all of the cells in your body. With the supply of the oxygen to the brain this increases the muscles in your body.

8. **Breathing strengthens posture**

Good breathing techniques over a sustained period of time will encourage good posture. Bad body posture will result incorrect breathing. So this is such an important process by getting your posture right from early on you will see great benefits.

9. **Breathing strengthens the Immune system**

Oxygen travels through your blood stream by attaching to hemoglobin in your red blood cells. This in turn then enriches your body to metabolise nutrients and vitamins.

10. **Breathing improves quality of the blood**

Deep breathing removes all carbon -dioxide and increases oxygen in the blood and thus increases blood quality.

11. **Breathing increases Digestion and Assimilation of food**

The digestive organs such as the stomach receive more oxygen; and hence operate more efficiently. The digestion is further enhanced by the fact that the food is oxygenated more.

12. **Breathing Improves the nervous system**

The brain, spinal cord and nerves receive increased oxygenation and are more nourished. This improves the health of the whole body. Since the nervous system communicates to all parts of the body.

13. **Breathing strengthen the Lungs**

As you breath deeply the lungs become healthy and powerful, a good insurance against respiratory problems.

14. **Proper breathing makes the Heart stronger**

Breathing exercises reduce the workload on the heart in two ways. Firstly, deep breathing leads to more efficient lungs, which means more oxygen, is brought into contact with blood sent to the lungs by the heart. So, the heart doesn't have to work as hard to deliver oxygen to the tissues. Secondly deep breathing leads to a greater pressure differential in the lungs, which leads to an increase in the circulation, thus resting the heart a little.

15. **Proper breathing assists in weight control**

If you are overweight the extra oxygen burns up the excess fat more efficiently. If you are underweight the extra oxygen feeds the starving tissues and glands.

16. **Breathing boosts energy level and improves stamina**

17. **Breathing improves cellular regeneration**

18. **Breathing elevates moods**

Breathing increase pleasure - inducing neuro chemicals in the brain to elevate moods and combat physical pain. Breathing correctly is not only important for living longer but also to have a good mood and keep performing at your best.



DIVINITY IS WITHIN YOU...

***When you begin to build your home,
you lay below a strong foundation.
you construct on it sturdy walls,
and place a roof that is resistant
To all weather conditions.***

***In the same way, to develop Godhood,
you must lay a foundation of strong character,
you must have walls of sturdy faith,***

***And the roof of Love
That withstards all circumstances.
You can appreciate its beauty.***

***In the same way,
only when the divinity within you
Begins to emerge slowly,
you begin to realize its beauty.***

- Sai Baba -