



Eldercare Coach: Supporting Family Caregivers through partnerships with Employers, Congregations and Organizations

As a nonprofit that champions older adults and their families and develops innovative solutions for unmet needs, AgeWell Middle Tennessee offers Eldercare Coach, providing education and care navigation support for family caregivers. With 10,000 baby boomers turning 65 everyday through 2029, eldercare is on the rise. In fact, there are over 40 million Americans providing care for aging loved ones, and 61% of those caregivers are working, most full time. Yet, very few employers offer caregiver support benefits to help employees balance work and family. AgeWell is working to change that.

Thanks to funding from the West End Home Foundation and other funders, AgeWell created Eldercare Coach by leveraging existing educational resources, online tools, expertise and strategic partnerships to help employers and organizations become caregiver friendly, and to help caregivers easily connect with trusted information, personalized guidance and support.

Through focus groups with working caregivers, AgeWell learned that trusted information, expert guidance and support are the core needs expressed by those caring for an aging loved one. Because every caregiving situation is unique, the heart of Eldercare Coach is the opportunity to schedule a 30-minute personalized phone consultation with a geriatric care professional. AgeWell's coaches do more than provide information and referral. They learn what the caregiver is concerned about, assess the needs of the care recipient and help the caregiver navigate next steps. They also provide self-care advice and support for caregivers who reach out when they are at the end of their rope and feel like they are alone.

In addition to serving caregivers, AgeWell helps employers understand their caregiving employees and the challenges of juggling work and caregiving. We help employers and organizations create a more caregiver friendly workplace by offering a turnkey benefit solution that is easy to deploy.

Since launching Eldercare Coach in 2020, AgeWell has provided Helpline support and Eldercare Coach phone consultations to more than 600 family caregivers. We've also provided eldercare education to more than 400 family caregivers, employers and senior service professionals.

A Caregiver's Story

Deanna reached out to the Eldercare Coach in 2022 because she was struggling to provide care for her father, diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. Deanna and her husband provided all his meals. He had issues with paranoia, repeating the same questions and feeling the need to be with Deanna more and more. He lived across the street and frequently interrupted Deanna while she was working from home. Other than the Alzheimer's diagnosis, her father was very healthy, but Deanna knew that her father would soon need more intense care than she and her husband could provide.

During Deanna's 30-minute phone consultation, AgeWell's Eldercare Coach discussed care and living options. Deanna was not ready to consider moving her father to an assisted living community, so the coach suggested an adult day program as an option. This would provide the supervision and socialization he needed, while giving Deanna a break and the opportunity to work without interruptions. Deanna and the coach also discussed future options as her father's needs increased and support available to Deanna as a caregiver.

Almost one year after the initial consultation, Deanna reached out again to Eldercare Coach, ready to talk about Assisted Living placement. Now, besides caring for her father, her mother was rapidly declining from Vascular Dementia. Her parents were divorced and lived separately. Providing daily care to both of them, working from home, and maintaining three households was putting a strain on her marriage and health. Even trying to balance all that, she felt guilty about considering assisted living for her parents. During the consultation, our Eldercare Coach discussed more about supportive living and long-term care options along with legal and financial resources that could help. Our coach also provided several resources for Deanna and her husband to get the emotional support they needed through the transition.

If you would like to hear more about Deanna and how Eldercare Coach helped her with the challenge of being a family caregiver, listen to WPLN's This is Nashville episode - How caring for an older relative impacts life, finances and health:

<https://wpln.org/post/episodes/how-caring-for-an-older-relative-impacts-life-finances-and-health/>

Pictured (L to R): LaTonya Turner, WPLN News; Grace Smith, AgeWell Executive Director; Khalil Ekulona, This is Nashville Host; Deanna, Family Caregiver; Rebecca Redd, Eldercare Coach.



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