



Family Caregiving:

Tips and Tools for You and Your Loved Ones



Myths and Realities of Family Caregiving

Consider the True/False options for each of six statements listed that are related to family caregiving. Check which options you think are “True” or “False.” Once you have done this, the accurate responses and key points are available on the back side.

Section 1: True/False Statements on Family Caregiving

| | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> True <input type="checkbox"/> False | 1. The most common care decision that families need to make about care for aging adults is about what type of care facility in which to have them live. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> True <input type="checkbox"/> False | 2. Adults who still are caring for children at home and also assume care of an aging parent have been referred to as being part of the “sandwich generation.” |
| <input type="checkbox"/> True <input type="checkbox"/> False | 3. Adult daughters are the most common primary caregivers when family care is given to an aging or needy adult. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> True <input type="checkbox"/> False | 4. Family-friendly business policies are paying increased attention to the need for family leave to care for dependent adults. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> True <input type="checkbox"/> False | 5. Women provide most of the direct care that is given in family caregiving situations to aging parents or family members. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> True <input type="checkbox"/> False | 6. The feelings of obligation that an adult child feels toward a parent are the strongest predictor of how often an adult child has contact with a parent. |

Understanding myths versus realities in family caregiving can be helpful. Review the correct responses (see reverse side) to the True/False options to explore different realities associated with family caregiving.

Section 2: Myths and Realities of Family Caregiving

1. The most common care decision that families need to make about care for aging adults is about what type of care facility in which to have them live.

Answer – False

Myth – The majority of older adults who need care will spend time in a nursing home at some point in their lives.

Reality – Most care provided to older adults is done by family caregivers in a home setting. Family caregivers provide 70% to 80% of all the community-based care needed by older persons. Thus, the most common care decision is who will provide family-based care when it is needed.

2. Adults who still are caring for children at home and also assume care of an aging parent have been referred to as being part of the “sandwich generation.”

Answer – True

Myth – Nearly every adult American will pass through the experience of being part of the “sandwich generation.”

Reality – Although having this experience is not uncommon for adult Americans, the majority of adults do not have dependent children when they assume care for a parent in need.

3. Adult daughters are the most common primary caregivers when family care is given to an aging or needy adult.

Answer – False

Myth – Daughters usually are the primary caregiver for an adult who needs family care.

Reality – The most common primary caregivers are, first, the spouses, either husbands or wives, followed by daughters and daughters-in-law. So, adult daughters provide a great deal of care, but for aging spouses to be in this circumstance is even more common.

4. Family-friendly business policies are paying increased attention to the need for family leave to care for dependent adults.

Answer – True

Myth – Company policies relating to care for dependent family members mostly ignore care for dependent adults.

Reality – With more and more adults caring for aging family members, companies are being required to give increased attention to the need for flexible work and leave policies that allow for care for dependent adults. These trends are more likely to increase in the near future as the aging population increases significantly.

5. Women provide most of the direct care that is given in family caregiving situations to aging parents or family members.

Answer – True

Myth – The amount of direct care provided in family caregiving varies by cultural context so that men are most responsible in some cultures.

Reality – While an ethic of adult sons caring for parents exists in some cultural settings, even in those situations, women such as daughters-in-law or other women in the family provide the most direct care. However, involvement by men in direct care is increasing slowly.

6. The feelings of obligation that an adult child feels toward a parent are the strongest predictor of how often an adult child has contact with a parent.

Answer – False

Myth – A sense of filial obligation or duty toward a parent is the strongest motivation and predictor of how often an adult child has contact with a parent.

Reality – Although an adult child’s feelings of obligation are important, the biggest factor in regular contact between adult children and parents is proximity – how close they live to the parent. The next most important factor is the feelings of parent-adult child closeness that exist, and then feelings of obligation.

Answer Guide

1. False; 2. True; 3. False; 4. True; 5. True; 6. False.

Revised by: **Sean Brotherson**, Ph.D., Extension Family Science Specialist
Jane Strommen, Ph.D., Extension Gerontology Specialist
Philip Estep, M.S., Extension Associate

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