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Navigating the Journey of Aging Parents: What Care Receivers Want

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Navigating the Journey of Aging Parents: What Care Receivers Want

Keywords

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Navigating the Journey of Aging Parents: What Care Receivers Want

Reviewed by Edina L. Renfro-Michel

Cheryl A. Kuba. (2006). Navigating the Journey of Aging Parents: What Care Receivers Want. New York: Routledge, 177 pp., \$19.95 (paperback). ISBN 978-0-415-95288-0.

In approximately 25% of households in the United States, families are caring for adults age 50 or older (Flori, n.d.). Caring for an aging family member is a complicated process involving family dynamics as well as basic living and financial arrangements. Caregivers are often “sandwiched” between making decisions for the care of their children and that of their parents. This constant tug and pull can produce a high amount of stress and exhaustion. Additionally, care receivers who were once independent adults may have experienced a loss of mobility resulting in increased dependence on others. Whereas a plethora of research has been conducted regarding caregivers’ responses to the stresses of caregiving (Gottlieb & Wolfe, 2002; Ingersoll-Dayton, Neal, & Hammer, 2001; Koerner & Kenyon, 2007; Kurtz, Kurtz, Given, & Given, 2004), little research exists that explores the situation from the care receiver’s point of view. Kuba’s book *Navigating the Journey of Aging Parents: What Care Receivers Want* (2006), which is based on her master’s thesis qualitative research, explores the needs of care receivers as determined by the care receivers themselves. In addition to her master’s degree in gerontology, Kuba was an executive director of a retirement community and the primary caregiver for her own parents. Kuba combines her experiences in working with older adults with her qualitative and professional research specific to the topics she discusses.

In the organization of *Navigating the Journey of Aging Parents: What Care Receivers Want*, Kuba has considered the lives of exhausted or overwhelmed caregivers. Rather than reading this book cover to cover, a caregiver would

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be able to find topics of interest by using the subject index. The book's 14 short chapters cover a wide variety of topics including communicating with the care receiver, making decisions regarding living situations, and providing long-distance caregiving. Each chapter is divided into shorter, well-defined sections, often including bullet points and indentation of material. Many of the chapters contain resources for caregivers and care receivers, information from the care receiver's point of view, and explanations of developmental stages of older adults. Although Kuba's book includes a wealth of information, caregivers who would like to explore topics in more depth may consult the comprehensive reference list.

Whereas this book is steeped in research, it does not read like the thesis from which it originated. Kuba's engaging, sometimes humorous, writing holds the reader's interest. The quotations infused within each chapter provide readers with unique insight into the thoughts and feelings of care receivers and caregivers. Kuba imparts unbiased information to help caregivers tailor decisions about many aspects of caring for the aging population to their own family situations.

That caregiving is difficult for both care receivers and care providers is communicated to readers. Kuba clearly has empathy for the care receivers, as evidenced in her writings on the subjects of the difficulty of aging, losing independence, and adjusting to new living situations. Moreover, Kuba is empathetic toward the caregivers, acknowledging the difficulties of balancing self-needs with caregiving needs and the interaction with family dynamics and personalities. Kuba's objective perspective is specifically evident when discussing the use of long-term care facilities and reasons that family members may not be able or willing to take part in the care of aging parents. Kuba negotiates the reader through difficult topics with easy-to-read information and concrete steps caregivers can take to develop strategies to improve caregiving for everyone concerned.

Although Kuba focuses on adult children caring for their aging parents, I believe that anyone in contact with older adults would benefit from reading *Navigating the Journey of Aging Parents: What Care Receivers Want*. Kuba describes aging adults through their own words, helping others to view the world through a developmental stage different from what the majority of caregivers have experienced. The readability of this book opens its use to a broad population, enabling counselors to recommend this book to clients.

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