

WHEN THE PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL CROSS:
BEING A GERIATRIC CARE PROFESSIONAL AND CARING FOR AGING PARENTS.

POETICS OF AGING CONFERENCE
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Presenter:

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Abstract: Geriatric Care Professionals (social workers, public health workers, care managers, psychologists, agency directors etc) face many stresses in working with an aging population including limited resources, increases in the number of clients needing support and complex psychosocial and medical issues. What happens when Geriatric Care Professionals also find themselves as the caregivers for their own aging parents? How do they balance caring for other people's parents while also caring for their own parents? How do agencies support both their clients and staff regarding aging issues? This roundtable presentation will include a facilitated discussion by two geriatric care professionals regarding their own experience confronting aging parents with input from participants.

"Professionals in the field of aging often feel especially neglectful about living a distance from their older relatives. In their daily work, they see the difference it makes when family members are actively involved in older people's lives. They tend to carry an extra degree of guilt about their own parents and grandparents: "Here I am helping everyone else's grandmother, while mine gets hardly any help from me." Such professionals are keenly aware of the difficulty of practicing their expertise over the phone or through brief visits. They also hear themselves giving advice to others that they are unable to follow in their own lives. For example, "How can I counsel other people to do what I am not doing?"

Furthermore, experienced helpers who are able to extrapolate from current circumstance to what the future is likely to bring for them do not have the luxury of ignorance about the implication of their choices."

- Hooyman and Lustbader (1986), *Taking care*, New York: Free Press

- What are the unique issues facing geriatric professionals who care for their own parents?
- How does countertransference manifest itself when working with elders?
- Are there positives to being a geriatric care professional working? What insight do we have that someone not working in the field has?
- What are our evolving abilities? (changes from our youth)
- What steps do you take to balance your professional work caring for elders and your personal work caring for your own parents?
- How can we reframe our dual roles so that being a geriatric professional enhances our role as a caregiver of our parents and in our work with our elder clients?