**Captaining The Caregiving Ship:**

**Who You Need On Your Crew So You Don’t Sink**

The sad fact is that most people are caring for their sick or older loved ones alone or with the help of just one or two others. While this is the norm in our culture, it’s a far from ideal for the caregivers involved and the loved ones they care for.

We’ve all heard the adage that it takes a village to raise a child. I believe it takes a caregiving crew of a captain, first mates and dockhands to best care for an adult who is sick or disabled. A solid caregiving crew ensures that the best possible care is provided and that the caregivers experience less stress.

The primary caregiver should be the captain. He or she is “in charge” of the overall caregiving voyage. Often the captain in caregiving is a spouse or adult child. The primary caregiver captain needs to have several first mates (secondary caregivers) and numerous dockhands (tertiary caregivers). In boating, a first mate helps the captain of the ship make the voyage as smooth as possible. Dockhands help ensure a safe dockage of the ship. So what do first mate and dockhand caregivers do to support the primary caregiver captain?

Secondary caregivers or caregiving first mates can support both the primary caregiver as well as the person who needs care. A trusted secondary caregiver might take the older loved one to the doctor. Or the secondary caregiver might arrange for a cleaning service for the primary caregiver since she no longer has time for housekeeping because of all the caregiving duties. A tertiary caregiver or dock hand in caregiving might be the neighbor who picks up some groceries for the primary caregiver while she shops for her own food.

Unfortunately most primary caregivers don’t function like captains. They don’t see that they need to be the captain in charge—they believe they should handle every single duty on the caregiving voyage. A less stressed out primary caregiver recruits others to be part of her caregiving crew and assigns them duties so she doesn’t have to do it all.

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