Helping the Elderly Deal with the Stress of Relocation

Issues and tips regarding stress effects in the elderly
Several issues need to be taken into account when helping elderly friends and family who may be under stress after a disaster and who are suffering from the effects of a sudden relocation.

Communication problems
There might be challenges with elderly people who are relocated into a shelter including confusion and disorientation.

Normal age-related slowing of thinking, difficulty seeing and hearing, and physical limitations may cause communication challenges.

Tip: Make sure the elderly person has all of their required belongings including; eyeglasses, hearing aids, canes, walkers and any other resources used to physically move around. Be patient and calm. Speak loudly enough for them to hear you, but do not shout. Keep your messages simple and clear. Repeat information and make sure that the person in your care hears and understands what is said.

Chronic illness and dietary considerations
Arthritis may prevent an elderly family member from standing in line. Some medications can cause confusion or an increased risk of problems such as dehydration. Memory problems can cause communication problems.

Signs of stress in the elderly
Older adults can suffer various symptoms. It is important to make sure that they are medically stable before deciding these symptoms are due to emotional stress. Under stress, whether physical or emotional, the elderly can:
- Become mentally confused,
- Suffer from exhaustion
- Withdraw from friends and family
- Suffer from personality changes
You should also know that the elderly might tend to complain of bodily symptoms rather than emotional problems when under stress. Again, remember not to dismiss any physical symptoms as just due to stress.

**How to help the elderly deal with stress**

In general terms, these principles will help guide you when helping an elderly person deal with the stress of evacuation and relocation:

- Provide strong and persistent verbal reassurance.
- Assist with recovery of physical possessions as is safe, make frequent home visits, and arrange for companions.
- Give special attention to suitable residential relocation, ideally in familiar surroundings with friends or those they have met before.
- Help re-establish contact with family and friends.
- Assist in getting medical and financial assistance.
- Help re-establish medication and any dietary regimens.
- Provide transportation to the doctor, grocery store, etc.

**Resources Are Available**

Additional information, self-help tools and other resources are available online at www.MagellanHealth.com/member. Or call us for more information, help and support. Counselors are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to provide confidential assistance at no cost to you.