My Aging Parents Need Help - Insights from Author and Attorney Cindy Kang

Air Date: August 03, 2025

Guest: Cindy Kang

Resources: My Aging Parent Needs Help!: 7 Step Guide to Caregiving with No R…

Facebook Support Group: Caregivers Of Aging Parents and Loved Ones

David Lowry: 0:29

That was Cindy Kang, our guest today on Peaceful Life Radio. She's the author of the book, My Aging Parent Needs Help. Oh, we're gonna need to know more about that. Don, my good friend is on the program with us today. How are you, Don?

Don Drew: 0:42

I'm doing well, David, and today I'm going to introduce our guest Cindy Kang, who is also known by her pen name, Cynthia Kaye. The author of My Aging Parent Needs Help: Seven Step Guide to Caregiving with no Regrets, More Compassion and Going from Overwhelmed to Organized. This book is a compassionate and practical guide for family caregivers navigating the emotional and logistical challenges of caring for aging parents. Her book was Born from Deeply Personal experiences, which we're gonna be talking about, and has served as a lifeline for many overwhelmed caregivers trying to find their way. Professionally, Cindy is the founder of CMK Law Group, a boutique virtual law firm based in California. It focuses on estate and special needs planning. After two decades as a corporate attorney for companies like Disney and Google, Cindy now helps busy parents, especially those in the sandwich generation, gain peace of mind through thoughtful, clear, and compassionate legal planning. Cindy, welcome to Peaceful Life Radio.

Cindy Kang: 1:42

Thank you so much for having me here.

David Lowry: 1:44

Cindy, we are impressed with you, a U-C-L-A attorney, and then she worked for Google and Disney. I mean, you've been around the block, girl. Tell us about your journey, which led you to writing My Aging Parent Needs Help and your work as an attorney, and how all of that works together.

Cindy Kang: 2:02

Yeah. Yeah. It's, it has been an interesting path. Professionally being an attorney for over 20 years. And now kind of switching gears into estate planning, it really goes hand in hand with what's always been in my heart, which has been how to connect with people, especially the people in populations where they're vulnerable or forgotten. So it's the poor, the aged, or the disabled. So right now I focus on helping families plan ahead for peace of mind after they're gone. And with regard to the book and my

personal experience as being a family caregiver, it's been such an interesting and heartfelt path, caring for my own parents. And it came to the point where I realized, okay, I think there's enough people out there who would benefit from some of the learnings that I gathered. And if I can be of any service and put this together into a book, I would be very happy to do that.

Don Drew: 3:07

Cindy, your father needed quite a bit of care after suffering several strokes and also you still care, I guess, for your 91-year-old mother. Can you tell us a little bit about that personal experience?

Cindy Kang: 3:18

I'm in it right now, very personally. My father after suffering a few strokes, was bedbound and really needed a lot of help. Prior to that though, it had been a gradual journey, and I've always been somewhat of in that caregiver role for my parents. So it wasn't sudden. I had always taken on some level of responsibility, caring for my parents, but once he became bedbound it went to a whole other level where I really dove into that all consuming journey of being that family caregiver. My father passed away a few years ago, and ever since that point I shifted gears and focused on my mother to make sure that she was okay, and she actually recently entered into at home hospice. So we're going into a new phase of this journey. It's an ongoing learning experience for me.

David Lowry: 4:08

Cindy. We've had nurse Penny Hawkins on our program, a hospice nurse, an advocate for people in hospice care and doing things like what you're doing. So, our best wishes and blessings are our minds for you and your mother, during this time and hope that everything goes well. Many people struggle to know when to become involved. You see your parents and you think, oh, they're okay. Or they'll tell you we're fine, but you look at'em and you're not so sure. What are some subtle signs that a parent may need more help than they're letting on?

Cindy Kang: 4:39

Like I said earlier, it really sneaks up on us. It's not a all of a sudden clear cut thing. It's a very gradual thing, which makes sense. because as we age we start losing some of our abilities on a gradual, almost unnoticeable basis. A few common signs that I've experienced personally and what I hear of when I'm talking to others are things like piles of mail that isn't opened, or you notice that bills aren't being paid or that they're not eating quite as they used to. When you go and visit and you see their refrigerators empty. And you also notice changes in their personality or activity levels. Just things that are subtle, but you know that you just get this sense that things are not quite right, and that is what might trigger you to dig deeper and start that conversation.

Don Drew: 5:34

One of our, guests, Dr. Christie Vincent talked with us a few months ago now, and her point was to ask more questions.

Cindy Kang: 5:41

Yes, and so much of it, like everything else, depends on each family's unique dynamic, their existing relationship. But that all being said, I think a general good rule of thumb is to approach conversations with curiosity not commands. Oftentimes when adult children see their aging parents start to diminish in certain capabilities, we're already in that mindset of kind of barking orders at our children and taking over and thinking we know better and best, which generally doesn't work well. And instead, really having that self-control. I think it takes a lot of discipline for us as adult children to remember and recognize that our parents are adults, that they do still have, depending on where they are in that journey, they still have their abilities. And just because they may be fading in their abilities in some areas doesn't mean they're fading in all areas. And so one of the techniques that I use and that I've seen works with my other friends who go through this is bringing stories up, right? When I talk to my mom, I would reference another friend of mine who we both know and, Oh, you know what? So and so's mom ended up at the hospital. She didn't have any of her documents ready. It ended up being a big nightmare for everyone. And now that she's out of the hospital, she realizes that she needs to get X, Y, and Z prepared and have we thought about that? So you engage in that conversation with that parent being involved and feeling that they're initiating and in control, and to have that sense of togetherness in approaching it really helps rather than pitting yourself against each other because you are acting like you know it all.

David Lowry: 7:32

Cindy, you sound so sensitive and you're giving great communication advice on how to approach parents, and I think most parents know that, Well, I'm probably in the latter part of my life. I probably need a will, power of attorney, written things like this, but sometimes we feel a little guilty about bringing that up, or sometimes we go through stages such as worry, resentment,or guilt. How can we avoid this emotional rollercoaster that adult children go through in a more healthy way?

Cindy Kang: 8:05

Right. One thing that has helped me, at least personally, is being aware of the fact that this is normal. Actually having all ranges of emotion in this very challenging time in your parents' life and your life as the caregiver, recognizing that's normal and not necessarily trying to avoid it can be very helpful to just recognize that, oh gosh, I am compassionate, loving, angry, resentful all at once. And why am I feeling this way? Because I'm human? And realizing that you're not the only one who feels that way can be extremely helpful. And then you just experience those things and realize that they're going to pass.

Don Drew: 8:48

I hate to bring up a further complication, but sometimes there are other siblings involved, and they may not always agree with you or whoever the caregiver is we're talking about. They may not agree about what's best for mom and dad. Do you have any advice for how to work through that?

Cindy Kang: 9:06

Yes. And I find that it's often the case when you have siblings and an aging parent who needs assistance. Usually one, I don't know if you've noticed this, but one sibling

usually steps up as kind of the lead, which is quite helpful. And I would recommend that they maintain a clear level of communication with the other siblings and gauge what the level of engagement is. because again, it really depends on the family's dynamic. Do the other siblings even want to be involved? Do they just wanna be barking out what they think is right or wrong, but not willing to step up and actually do it? I like the philosophy. Well, if you're gonna suggest it, then you own it. But if you're gonna suggest it and delegate it, then that's a whole different story. And so as that lead sibling, or if you don't have a lead, but you have a group of siblings having regular sibling touchpoints, whether it's a phone call, a cadence, and then spelling out a very simple, family agreement. Who's gonna organize the outside caregiver schedule? Who's gonna help financially if they can't help physically? Who's gonna order some Uber delivered meals on certain days? Things like that. And having an arrangement ahead of time can really help smooth out the disagreements. And again, the if you suggest it you own, usually helps when somebody's like, oh, nevermind, then maybe that's not such a great idea if I'm the one who has to do it.

David Lowry: 10:32

I love the idea of open communication. In your book, you walk your readers through some of the legal things they need to know on financial sides of things. Since you're an attorney and do estate planning, let's talk about some of those important documents we need to be thinking about.

Cindy Kang: 10:46

In the book I wanted to at least provide an overview of the different legal, financial, government resource landscape out there because it can be so overwhelming. It really is overwhelming. I'm an attorney and it's overwhelming. So the book tries to lay out at least some basic areas that I would hope the reader can dig into the extent that it applies to them and in their state, since it's even more complicated, it's state by state. But with my hat as an estate planning lawyer, I would recommend that everyone needs to have some basic documents in place, regardless of your assets and things like that. Anyone who has a body, that's pretty much everyone, needs to have incapacity documents in place. That would be a durable power of attorney, which assigns a trusted person, an agent, to make decisions for you if you're not able to make decisions for yourself, for your financial and daily day-to-day types of matters. And then some type of healthcare directive, which is a similar concept, if you're not able to make medical decisions for yourself, you have a trusted person to do that for you so that they know what your preferences are and that it's not left up to guessing and left up to chance.

David Lowry: 12:00

Cindy, I really agree with what you just said, and if people wanna use this program, and me as an example, my mom did not have a living will in place. And I think my mom probably thought we would know what to do. So when the big stroke happened to her, all three of us were put into a room with a doctor having to make decisions. It really put us in a spot trying to decide in this critical moment, What do we do for our mother? So please, please, please get directions, put it in writing, tell your children, and have it on hand. Those are so very vital.

Cindy Kang: 12:34

At a minimum, everyone should have their incapacity documents, and the next level would be to have some type of a living trust in place. The way I like to describe it is estate planning is not about you, it's about the people you love. And if you can have your wishes set out and planned now, it makes life so much better when you're unable to make those decisions directly for your loved ones. It's an act of love and an act of giving you peace of mind. Those are some basic documents everyone should have. And then hopefully you can go into the book and look at all the different areas because there's so many other resources. A lot of it's just awareness and it can drastically improve your life as the aging parent or your life as the caregiver.

Don Drew: 13:21

One of the big issues that always comes up is supporting independence and dignity in the parents' life. How do you help people find a right balance between providing support and respecting their parents' independence and dignity?

Cindy Kang: 13:33

That's a really great question. In my opinion, it's a matter of respect and putting yourselves in the shoes of your parent. How would we want our children to approach that with us? Do we want them to bark orders and tell us this is how I need things to be done? Well, no, we would want there to be a dialogue. The best and most helpful approach, at least in my experience, is enabling our aging parents to have as much independence and agency over their lives as long as possible. And whatever we can do to bolster and support that independence the better. Because why would we wanna take that away since that would put more on our plate, right? If they can do it, encourage them, support them, and let that ride out as long as possible until they no longer can do that. And then we can step in. They might have the ability to do things on their own in certain areas for a very long time, but a lot of adult children, think, Oh, well, mom can't do this one area, I'm just gonna take over for everything. And that usually doesn't go over well for either side.

David Lowry: 14:42

Really great advice for all of us. Just remember, How do you wanna be treated? Because guess what? You're gonna be in that spot someday. And what you give out is probably what you're going to get at some point. Cindy caregiver burnout is a really huge issue. What are some of the early warning signs and what can listeners do to avoid burning out?

Cindy Kang: 15:03

That is definitely a serious concern and I experienced it intensely. Some of the early signs would include emotional exhaustion to the point of almost the sense of numbness. You go from caring so much and being on top of everything, and now you've researched everything and you've read all these books and you're all over it. But you get to the point where all these different emotions don't make any sense. Where it's like in one moment you feel love and another moment you feel hate, and just all these things coming together and your nervous system just goes overboard and at some point you just shut down and you don't realize it until you notice yourself almost not being able to feel

anything. You're just kind of numb. So that's one thing. You just can't feel anything, that's a sign. Another is. You feel too much and it's usually negative. Intense irritation and anger and it's really bad when it starts being directed at the person you're taking care of. You see them and you just get super angry and irritable, like, okay, this is getting really bad. Another thing is neglecting yourself. Basic things, you know, Oh, I don't need to eat, I'm not gonna eat. Or, I don't have time to eat. Or I don't have time to go to the dentist, et cetera. Another one is hyper responsibility, feeling like No one can take care of mom like I can. I'm not gonna delegate because it's not gonna be done right. Only I can do it. Which just leads more into that vicious cycle. Those are a few signs and some things that can really help nip that in the bud before it goes into full-blown catastrophe mode. Because if you don't check that, you are not going to be able to function and then you are not helping anybody. Now you're gonna have to have another caregiver for you. So some ways to nip that in the bud, again, it's awareness. Just being aware that caregiver burnout is a real thing. And these are some of the signs, at least knowing that like, Okay, there's a name to it, I'm not going crazy. I'm not a terrible person. This is a result of just being human and being under the circumstances. And another thing is once you're aware, to have an outlet to communicate and building that communication into a larger self care mini routine. It doesn't have to be long since we know that caregivers are time starved. It could just be Okay for two minutes every hour, whatever it might be, I'm gonna go take a deep breath outside and give my best friend a phone call and just check in, or go and log into a caregiver support group and at least be able to have a place where you can, say, This is a really hard day. Just have some outlet that further bolsters that awareness that this is a normal part of caregiving, and enable you to have somewhere to channel that energy. Although it might be hard to imagine right now, that one day, this period that seems so overwhelming will be a cherished memory. And to explain that, I was in the middle of it with my dad. It was such a hard time. It was just so rough. I was so burnt out. And I was speaking with this lady who told me that she had lost both of her parents. She was in her maybe late sixties and she had lost her parents a few years earlier and she had been a caregiver for them for years. And during that time she was just miserable. because when you're in it, you're kind of miserable a lot of times. It's really grueling work. And now that she was past it, she said, strangely enough, I look back, it was some of the most beautiful, most cherished. It gets, it chokes me up cherished memories because it's such a special and sacred time that you're providing that support for your loved one. I'm sorry, I get emotional. So just know that even though it feels like it seems endless at times, that this season will pass and just to conduct yourself and interact with your loved one in a way that you'll know that you'll be able to look back and have no regrets and to also give yourself grace. You don't have to be perfect. You just have to be present. Your presence alone is already a huge gift.

David Lowry: 19:19

Caregivers feel such a obligation to be with one they love, and at the same time, they need relief and they need some time to themselves and they need moments of peace and quiet. I have a friend right now who is going through this caregiving thing you're talking about. And it's been a while, 25-7-attention. And when I see this person, I see the wear and the stress. This is a very difficult time for people. So you're giving us such

great advice on this. You've created a practical book with so many tools. Can you share one or two resources or checklists that readers have found especially helpful?

Cindy Kang: 19:58

Yes, and it ties into caregiver burnout too because another thing that you should do to avoid that full blown burnout is ask for help, know where all the different resources are, and using these professional resources, they are the true background heroes that makes all of this possible and oftentimes people aren't aware or don't rely on these resources enough. Just reaching out and understanding what services are out there is a huge relief to know like, oh, I might not need this today, but at least I know it's out there. So if things get really overwhelming, at least I know that these exist. And then when you get to a certain point, actually calling upon them to step into your team so you're not doing this on your own. And when you invest time and energy to finding and training some of these outside professional resources and in-home caregivers for example, they free up so much of your time and emotional bandwidth so that now you're freed up not to just change the bedsheets and diapers or whatever it might be, but you are there now to provide that emotional support while you have this help to do some of the other things that generally cause a lot of resentment in family caregivers.

Don Drew: 21:21

Your book points out that you don't have to do it all on your own. There are a number of other outside professionals such as geriatric care managers, in home aides, senior living advisors, people of that nature. How can you use or integrate them into the care that you want to provide?

Cindy Kang: 21:38

Yes. There's a master caregiver checklist, which is kind of The Big Kahuna. When I was going through this and envisioned this book, this resource I was hoping and wishing that there would be someone who had been through this before who could just sit next to me and give me a heads up like, Hey, you might wanna be thinking about this next before it comes, because you know, usually by the time it comes, that's when everyone's scrambling. So this master checklist is your surrogate mentor who's sitting right next to you who can guide and prompt you, Hey, have you thought about this? Have you thought about that? And proactively go and gather things so that you have everything in one place before you actually need them. Because chances are, when you need that information, it's all oftentimes in a circumstance where it's stressful and rushed and you can't find things. If you can use that checklist and gather everything ahead of time, it's the whole organized really prevents overwhelm. So that's been useful. Another one has been there's a list that I have of smart gadgets. So wifi enabled smart gadgets and using technology to help us. The technology's out there, but we're recreating the wheel and giving ourselves all this manual burden when we really don't have to. So I have a list of different gadgets that enables caregivers to have a little bit more freedom. Things like the smart the Nest Thermostat, so when mom calls and says It's so cold, can you please turn down the air conditioner? We don't have to drive 20 minutes to go do that. You just do that from your phone. There's also things like a stove guard so if someone forgets to turn off the stove, which is very common, as my dad had that problem, you can set the timeframe, if it's no motion and the fire's on for more than five minutes, it

automatically shuts off. Things like that make life much easier. One other one is the smart speaker, like the Amazon Echo, goodness, that has been such a game changer for my dad and mom. Enabling our aging parents to learn how to use those things bolster their own sense of independence so they can check the weather, check the date, play their favorite songs. It's so awesome to see them light up when they learn something new and it keeps them emotionally more uplifted, which means less time for you to try to cheer them up. So using those technology lists I think has been very, very helpful for readers.

Don Drew: 24:09

Well, Cindy, if there's one message you hope every listener walks away with today, what would it be?

Cindy Kang: 24:14

I just wanted to offer to your listeners if there's anything that I can do to be of service and, provide any resources or support that they're free to reach out to me. They can reach out to me at my current boutique law firm, I'm a virtual law firm based in California. I support families located in California. They can reach me at my website, which is www dot, CMK Law Group dot com. And I'd be happy to share whatever resources I can. And the other thing I'd like to offer is that I also established a free Facebook support group for caregivers of Aging loved ones. And that is a growing group. But if your listeners would like to check it out they can go to Facebook and search for Support For Caregivers Of Aging Parents And Loved Ones. That's the name of my support group. And hopefully there could be at least some place, it's a safe moderated space where caregivers of aging parents can freely share tips, feelings, emotions, so that they don't feel like they need to go through this alone.

Don Drew: 25:27

Cindy and her book, My Parent Needs Help is available on Amazon under her pen name Cynthia Kaye, that's K A Y E. While every situation is different, there are certain common elements that most family caregivers share like determining living arrangements, managing medical treatments, organizing a caregiver schedule, and figuring out how to pay for it all. Cynthia Kang, thank you for being with us on Peaceful Life Radio.

Cindy Kang: 25:53

Thank you so much for having me.