

Visiting Elderly Parents

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We all know that it is very important to keep visiting our elderly parents. How effective is your visit? Are you on a regular visiting (or phoning) pattern with your elderly parents? Do you visit every weekend as regular as clockwork? Do you look forward to the visit? Or do you feel a little bit reluctant sometimes to visit? Do you want to skip visits sometimes, but know that your parents would be very disappointed?

These feelings are common when you have a very regular schedule. For some people, keeping a regular schedule works well for them but other people may turn “routines” into “ruts” although it may not be related to the degree of affection between you and your parents.

Elderly parents have their preferred schedule too. Therefore, considering the visit on a routine basis from the view point of the elderly parents is very important. Your parents may have some of the same reservation about the frequency and/or regularity of the visiting pattern. Maybe, your parents have a chance to visit a seldom seen friend, but they have to cancel it because you always visit at that time. Or, maybe your parents just don’t feel like cleaning up the place and would rather visit another time. Although it is nice to count on people and visits, they can become a problem for both generations if flexibility is not part of the visiting pattern. Although family member rank very high with elderly parents, they have other interests as well.

Setting a routine visiting schedule may not work very well. However, **if visiting on a regular basis, allow for flexibility for both generations which will make visits more meaningful and special.** It also indicates to others that the visit is because of the desire to visit, not just because of an obligation and blood ties. It also reduces the belief that the parent is always available for your visit.

Obviously, communication is the key to let your parents know that you respect their choices and decision. It means that communication would be more effective if you ask whether this day would be convenient for a visit. Remember, it would be okay for them to say “No.”

When there is flexibility in a visiting pattern, both generations value the time together and also know that they are there because they “choose” to, but not because they “have” to visit. This attitude also shows real acceptance and caring for family members.