

Better Health While Aging Podcast: 101 Avoiding Holiday Pitfalls with Aging Parents

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:00:00](#) Hello everyone. Welcome to Better Health While Aging, a podcast that gives you strategies and information about improving the health and wellbeing of older adults. We discuss common health problems that affect people over age 60, the best ways to prevent and manage those problems. And we also often address common concerns in the lemmas, that come up with aging parents and other older loved ones. Like what to do if you're worried about falls or safety or memory or even the quality of an older person's healthcare. I'm your host, Dr Leslie Kernisan. I'm a practicing geriatrician, so that means I'm a medical doctor, specialize in geriatrics, which is the art and science of modifying healthcare, so that it works better for older people and for their families. Today's episode is a special bonus episode featuring a very special guest. It is mid December and so soon it'll be that time of year when many of us get together with family to celebrate the holidays.

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:00:58](#) And this is often a joyous time, but it can also be a challenging time for many older adults and many families, especially if there have been any family concerns about an aging parent. So since I've been particularly focused on helping families over the past year, I decided to invite one of my favorite experts on managing family dynamics and aging issues, to help me do a special bonus episode.

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:01:22](#) My guest is Linda Fodrini-Johnson, and she is a licensed family therapist who has been a professional certified care manager, since 1984. She is also the founder of Elder Care Services, which was one of our most reputable full service care agencies in the San Francisco Bay area for over 30 years. She just recently transitioned it to a new owner, I believe. Linda is also a past president of the National Association for Geriatric Care Managers, which in 2015 was renamed as the Aging Life Care Association.

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:01:56](#) Last, but definitely not least. Linda is also one of our wonderful geriatric care managers slash aging life care professionals -- I never know which term to use these days -- but she is one of our wonderful experts who has been providing regular guidance and support to people who are in our [Helping Older Parents Membership](#) program. We have been so lucky to have her in the membership answering questions in our community forum and also on live Q and A calls with our members, because she just has so much experience to share with families.

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:02:25](#) And she's been also a terrific resource and answering questions about helping aging parents with dementia, because that's a particular area of expertise for her. And in fact, in preparing this

episode, I realized that back in 2016, she was also my very first guest on the podcast for episode three, in which we talked about helping reluctant parents address memory concerns. So when I thought about, how can I help families and provide some practical advice, to help them make the most of the opportunities and challenges that come up during the holidays. Linda was one of the first people who came to mind.

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:03:01](#)

And in fact we were thinking of covering this topic in a call for our Helping Older Parents Membership members, but then it occurred to us that this would be wonderfully useful for the larger, Better Health While Aging audience too. So here we are. So I'm just delighted to have Linda here to talk with us about how we can better manage some of the most common challenges, that come up with aging parents during the holidays. How we can avoid common pitfalls, and all of this so that we can make the most out of that time that we spend with our family. Linda, welcome back to the show.

Linda Fodrini-Johnson:

[00:03:32](#) Thanks for having me. It's a pleasure.

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:03:34](#)

So before we go into the challenges and your suggestions, I think many in our audience know the term geriatric care manager and aging life care professional, but not everyone does. This is one of the things that we have noticed actually when it comes to the membership, is that a lot of members come in and are not quite ... Either know very little about the kind of work that professionals like you do, or have some misconceptions about what professionals like you can and can't do.

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:04:00](#)

So can we start by just having you briefly review that, for the audience, just to make sure it's clear to everybody listening.

Linda Fodrini-Johnson:

[00:04:08](#) Sure. A professional geriatric care manager is usually a professional with a background in nursing, social work, counseling or gerontology. And there are members of the national association, and I'll get to that in a minute, who have related fields of experience, but when you're unfamiliar and you're looking for a professional geriatric care manager, I usually suggest looking for somebody that has a background in one of those four key professions.

Linda Fodrini-Johnson:

[00:04:42](#) And because the profession helps people with all the issues of aging, that professional should also have taken a certification examination or met the standards from the National

Association of Social Workers. There's a special expertise is granted to advance social workers through that association that's accepted by the Aging Life Care Association. So first of all that's the background. And care manager should have probably five years experience doing care management before you hires a person.

Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:05:25](#) Maybe they've worked under someone else during the years to get that experience before they put out their shingle. And so for the general public to know that the person's a member of the National Association of Geriatric Care Managers and as you say it is confusing, because they changed the name to Aging Life Care Association, and that's where you would do your research and you put in your zip code and then you'll get a list of people that have similar backgrounds, maybe not the background you're looking for.

Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:05:59](#) So there is a little bit of vetting that you have to do as a consumer, but if you get somebody with a licensed professional, has five years experience and they've taken the certification exam, that means they know about the resources, they know about the legal issues in your state and your area, they know about family dynamics. They definitely have expertise in dementia, because that's such an issue for the whole aging population. And they know a little bit about prescription medications and drugs.

Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:06:36](#) They know a lot about the illnesses that generally older people are dealing with and families and again, helping families navigate that whole journey from an initial diagnosis or to maybe before a diagnosis, to living at home, to moving to assisted living, to help with all those choices. If you think about that geriatric care manager is like a [sharper [00:07:04](#)] or a guide or a coach. They can stay with your family for the entire journey. So it becomes your go to key person, the hub of the wheel for the agent journey.

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:07:17](#) Yes. Thank you for that summary and that information. I think of geriatric care managers in a way as kind of professional problem solvers when it comes to the issues that come up for older adults and families.

Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:07:28](#) Mm-hmm .

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:07:30](#) For common age related life challenges and so those common problems start off with, "Is there a problem here? Do we need to do something about this or how can we be proactive in planning ahead for better aging?" I mean I think it's less common for people

to reach out to a care manager for that part. But you and your colleagues certainly have the experience and expertise for that. And then I briefly looked into it, but I guess to be certified as you were saying, there are all these different dimensions, right? Assisting with the family conversations, right?

Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:08:00](#) Mm-hmm . Yes.

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:08:01](#) And dynamics, practical things in terms of getting care into the home or considering what are other care and housing options.

Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:08:09](#) Mm-hmm .

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:08:10](#) There's the kind of healthcare management sort of supporting the older person and family in addressing chronic or new health conditions and interfacing, better with the doctors and the rest of the healthcare system. I guess looking into benefits and ways to pay sometimes.

Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:08:26](#) Right.

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:08:26](#) And you mentioned that the sort of most common underlying professions are nursing social work, I think you said family therapy.

Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:08:34](#) Counseling.

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:08:35](#) Counseling and gerontology.

Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:08:38](#) Mm-hmm .

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:08:38](#) And so I guess people have a degree and experience in that and then need to get extra training and work specifically in that. I'm problem solving for older adults in their families-

Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:08:49](#) Exactly.

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:08:49](#) ... to be certified. Right?

Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:08:51](#) Before they can take the test, actually they have to have that experience.

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:08:55](#) Right? Yes. Because obviously not all nurses focus on older adults and families. Not all social workers [stick 00:09:01] for the matter.

Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:09:02](#) No. No.

Better Health While Aging Podcast: 101 Avoiding Holiday Pitfalls with Aging Parents

- Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:09:03](#) Not all therapists and so it's somebody who has that professional background but has also, done some focus training and on the ground practice and working with aging adults and families.
- Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:09:16](#) Exactly.
- Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:09:16](#) So, and I've often been surprised at how few people know that geriatric care managers, now known as aging life care professionals, exist. But of course they are our favorite partners as geriatricians, because we are trained experts in addressing the health issues of older adults and we're good at incorporating families and families needed often all this additional help that we're not well equipped to do.
- Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:09:39](#) Like advise on exactly how to go about finding the right care in the home or considering different options. And I would say also that we don't particularly have expertise. I mean, I can do some coaching of how to manage dementia behaviors, but that some professionals have a lot more experience doing it like you.
- Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:09:57](#) Mm-hmm . The other thing also is when it comes to entitlements. How you apply for say VA benefits and what you need to do before you apply and you're denied. A care manager can help you sort that out, and the same thing when it comes to placement or having to move a parent or a family member. There are rules and regulations that you can get around by knowing your client well.
- Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:10:26](#) That also making sure that the physician fills out the paperwork correctly because if the physician, for instance put a All Zyme on dementia as the number one diagnosis in the state of California, that person would have to go into a locked facility, because it's assumed they're going to wander. Where a care manager that knows a client very well and knows that the client may be has mild cognitive impairment patterns very well, never has been a behavioral problem, we'll do fine in assisted living with a good support system could be redirected very easily. Some other people couldn't.
- Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:11:09](#) So for the families to have that expertise on, again, knowing the client well enough to make a good ... to give good advice on different options. And then also that next step is filling out the paperwork so you don't get denied what everyone thinks is the best solution for that family member. So it's a lot of that stuff.

Better Health While Aging Podcast: 101 Avoiding Holiday Pitfalls with Aging Parents

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:11:36](#) Yes, a lot of knowing the inside game.

Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:11:38](#) Exactly.

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:11:39](#) Now in today's episode we're going to focus on one of your many areas of expertise, but it's especially helping with just some of the family dynamics and issues that come up when families have had some concerns about an aging parent. So before we go into those challenges, can you just say a few words about your own particular background and how you came to be doing this kind of work?

Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:12:02](#) Well I saw my own parents struggle with my dad's mom and dad and my mother's mother, all of the same time as having three teenagers. And I was young married, and out of the home, starting a family of my own. But as I watched my parents struggle, I knew I wanted to go back to school and do something that would help families have a better experience being caring, loving adult children and not having to throw the baby out with the bath water.

Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:12:36](#) Seeing that my teenage brothers were a handful of the time and they were just going crazy. I saw that their marriage was really stressed and I said, there's got to be a better way. So when I went back to school, I knew I wanted to do something. I thought it would be social work until I discovered during my internship, that there was a profession called professional geriatric care manager.

Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:12:59](#) And that is exactly ... Then I knew that's what I wanted to do. And that was in the early eighties, so that's what propelled me in this direction. And concurrently, I just happened to ... my very first job as a care manager. My core care manager had started a Alzheimer respite program where no one could even pronounce the word Alzheimer's. They were saying old timers disease. At that point, she said she couldn't do it, did I want to?

Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:13:30](#) So I was the director of the very first Alzheimer respite program probably in the San Francisco Bay area. That was a social day program.

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:13:39](#) Mm-hmm .

Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:13:40](#) And I learned so much, much more than my class learning or book learning and working with those families in those early years. And that's been a passion of mine. So that's where I

began and work for a couple of nonprofits and they were wonderful organizations but not very creative. And then I decided to put out my shingle and become a care manager, helping families navigate all the dilemmas and the choice also of being a family caregiver.

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:14:13](#)

Right, right. And then your own degree is in family therapy?

Linda Fodrini-Johnson:

[00:14:19](#) Yes. My degree is clinical psychology and then I'm licensed as a family therapist. And that was because I felt as I went through ... My undergraduate degree is in social work, but I thought that the family dynamics would be the most serious kind of issues to deal with. And then connecting people to resources and helping them make choices would come secondary, after you address the emotional and behavioral issues. This kind of caring presents to a family.

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:14:55](#)

Well, that's so interesting. So now that it's 35 years later or whatever, they'll feel like the relationship dynamics are where it starts.

Linda Fodrini-Johnson:

[00:15:04](#) Well, yes I do, and people don't come to us until there's a crisis in some very wonderful, healthy families that are just loving and caring. They don't have a problem in their relationships, but they definitely have a problem in choosing options. And what do we do now, now that we have this diagnosis or what kind of a diagnosis should we see?

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:15:31](#)

Mm-hmm .

Linda Fodrini-Johnson:

[00:15:32](#) You must see that Leslie and medicine people come to you for one thing, but that's just a symptom of something bigger that needs to be addressed.

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:15:43](#)

Yes. For sure.

Linda Fodrini-Johnson:

[00:15:44](#) Yes. And it happens in families as well. So yes, it's been a great background for my career. And my colleagues, interesting that you asked that, that don't have as much psychology and family dynamic education. Say that they feel that, that's what was missing in their education to work in this field, so. Yes.

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:16:09](#)

Yes. Well I certainly feel like often it's important to address those dynamics in order to pursue the evaluation or the solutions.

Better Health While Aging Podcast: 101 Avoiding Holiday Pitfalls with Aging Parents

- Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:16:18](#) Yes.
- Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:16:20](#) We're trying to do, which is why I've been so glad that you have been able to be part of the membership. So let's now talk about these things that come up so.
- Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:16:29](#) Sure.
- Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:16:29](#) What would you say are some of the more common challenges that tends to come up at this time of year, when families who have aging parents that they have perhaps been concerned about when people come together for the holidays?
- Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:16:42](#) Yes, not for when people come together for the holidays, especially if they live a distance, they might not have been as aware of some changes that are going on in their aging family member. And when they see them, they could be a little bit startled and start the, " You should, you need to", with their parent, not preparing for ... they haven't been prepared for what they're going to see. So that can be a problem. And for those of you that have heard me on some of the other talks or seen anything that I've written before, know that we really don't want to ever use "you should" with our aging family members.
- Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:17:24](#) We want to say I'm concerned about. And so it's the approach. I think that that one of the things that families, if we want to call a pitfall around the holidays, is they're surprised by what they see. Mom's lost weight, dad's falling, mom's drinking more, the home isn't kept like it was kept before, there's just surprises. And you address them too quickly, instead of just coming and connecting the loves, a hug, whatever has been your tradition. Just to kind of stay with that, as you first get together. And that's kind of I guess advice for people that haven't seen their family member just yesterday or last week.
- Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:18:12](#) It's a little different than when you're seeing mom and dad every week and now your brother and sister have flown into town and you want to have a family meeting, because everybody's there for Christmas and you want to talk about the what ifs of the future. And mom and dad just want to have a normal happy holiday. Whether it was Christmas or Hanukkah or New Year's Eve or whatever that holiday celebration is going to be, they want it to be like the traditional one that they've had in previous years.

Better Health While Aging Podcast: 101 Avoiding Holiday Pitfalls with Aging Parents

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:18:43](#) Mm-hmm .

Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:18:44](#) A lot of older adults don't want to face the reality of their age and that they might become frail if they're not already frail, and the adult children are looking at the number attached to their parents' age and going, "88 Oh my God". Even though mom is very capable, they want a plan, they want to know, maybe they're the kind of people that are always having plans for everything and they want to know what to do, how to do it, where to find all the answers to all those issues.

Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:19:20](#) Like a lot of older adults don't share their finances with their adult children. I can't tell you the number of family meetings when I'll say, "Well what's mom or dad's income? Oh we don't know".

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:19:32](#) Mm-hmm , mm-hmm .

Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:19:33](#) What kind of resources do they have? "Well we have no idea". I can't really give you a lot of suggestions until we know how it's going to be paid for unless you're coming here willing to pay whatever, how much to help your parents.

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:19:49](#) So yes. So we've already mentioned ... maybe I can recap what we've mentioned and then we can dig into a few of them more. So it sounds some of the common challenges that come up, one scenario is adult children coming home for the holidays and they haven't seen their parents for a while, and just are surprised by the situation. Surprised on alarmed it sounds like.

Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:20:11](#) Yes.

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:20:11](#) And the tendency is often to jumping and start trying to fix things, in part by telling your aging parents all these things they should do.

Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:20:21](#) Right.

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:20:22](#) And so you are sort of speaking to the fact that it's ... Even though that's the common tendency and understandable it's one we'd want to think about being diplomatic, about how we voice our concern.

Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:20:34](#) Exactly.

Better Health While Aging Podcast: 101 Avoiding Holiday Pitfalls with Aging Parents

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:20:35](#) To say I'm concerned rather than you should, but you want to focus on connecting and maybe also just on observing for now.

Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:20:43](#) Mm-hmm .

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:20:44](#) What you're noticing and there'll be time to process it and figure out what to do about it a little bit later. So that was one scenario that we were ... that you mentioned. And then you mentioned another one which I think of coming in two variations. And of course, so far we haven't mentioned anything about holidays with parents who have dementia. And maybe we can come to that a little later in the episode, because I know that's an area of your special expertise.

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:21:09](#) But you were sort of talking about adult children wanting to get right into planning for the future or addressing something. It sounds ... Sometimes that's That their parent has an advanced age and they just think some of this should be dealt with. But that there are also other families who have already been involved in supporting an aging parent. Right?

Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:21:28](#) Exactly. Yes.

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:21:29](#) And maybe the adult child who ... One person I know [Janet Ben Min Ayden 00:00:21:35], refers to them as the designated child. Right? You know that-

Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:21:37](#) Yes, yes.

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:21:39](#) There's often the designated child who has been dealing with things.

Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:21:42](#) Mm-hmm .

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:21:42](#) Right? And so when the siblings come that designated child wants to take advantage of that time to get the family to help with things. So maybe we can talk about each of those in a little bit more detail. I guess first, how can adult children even know whether ... Or how common do you think it is that adult children get all worried because their parent is advanced in age, but it's actually really not at all suitable to be bringing it up at the holiday time?

Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:22:11](#) Oh, I think the majority. If you have a parent probably over the age of 80, you're talking about it or hearing about it in your social life, in your work life. You're hearing it from

colleagues that other people are dealing with this too. So I think it's very, very common to talk about the age of your parent. And you might say that, "Dad swims every day. He bikes 50 miles a week. Mom plays tennis and they're in their eighties!"

Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:22:43](#) But we all know the reality of life. It does come to an end. So the adult child, that 60 year old, 55 year old that has the important position in the career, they know that that phone can ring at any time and life will change for everybody.

PART 1 OF 3 ENDS [00:23:04]

Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:23:03](#) ... phone can ring at any time and life will change for everybody. So I think it's more common than we might hear about it, but you could do a little bit of a social survey. And in all of our conversations it just comes up, and mom and dad have not done, and this is what you'll hear. And mom and dad haven't done any planning, and if they have, they haven't shared it with us.

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:23:29](#) Right. That's what you were alluding to. Then when there is something going on and you ask them what is the financial situation, they don't. So it sounds like on one hand it's understandable and even to a certain extent, good that families are thinking about this and have this on their radar of we should address. I mean, I think when you say planning, people think we're going to have all this paperwork done and this stuff [crosstalk 00:23:56]. But as you and I know it starts with conversations.

Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:23:59](#) It does. Yes.

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:24:01](#) To better understand how everybody's preferences and values, and what they're already thinking about. Right?

Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:24:10](#) Right.

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:24:11](#) And what they would prefer. So it is starting with those conversations and thinking, do I know enough about what my aging parent is thinking or wants or might prefer?

Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:24:21](#) I guess there's a couple of approaches, Leslie. One is, is if there's already a designated child that's the it person, and that that child is overwhelmed, that adult child might say to the siblings who are coming into town for this holiday or special event, it could be even a parent's birthday, they're coming into town for this, "Let's have a phone conversation. Let's have a conference call and

talk about mom and dad, or needs, and my needs as a designated child where I need help." And just be frank. Sometimes families can do that and really come together with each person taking a different role.

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:25:02](#)

Now you said have a phone calls, but family are coming into town. So you mean a phone call before everybody comes in?

Linda Fodrini-Johnson:

[00:25:09](#) Before everybody comes in.

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:25:10](#)

So basically try to address that before everyone's there.

Linda Fodrini-Johnson:

[00:25:14](#) What the issues are, and what we'd like to accomplish. Maybe you want to accomplish four things, and maybe you only get accomplished one, but you want to have, whatever the holiday is, you want to have that celebration as traditional as possible. And the conversation either the day after, I wouldn't do it the day before. The day after. You don't want to do it when you're drinking alcohol or having a big meal, and there's a lot to do, and there's children in presence and candle lighting or whatever is happening, you don't want it to happen then, but the next day. And then the approach would be, "Mom and dad, you guys are doing so great." This is the healthy parents, right? We want to know what your plans are if one of you breaks a hip, or God forbid has a stroke, what would happen? Tell us. And so we know how to get the help you want if it falls on to us.

Linda Fodrini-Johnson:

[00:26:19](#) If you do that casually and not too intense, I think it will come up, and if it doesn't, you've started the thought process with your parent. You can come around to it again, and even a couple of weeks, but don't get overly concerned with, "We've got to get a copy of their trust. We need to know where their bank accounts are." Just go slow with that. Unless your parents are saying, "Oh, we wanted to share that with you kids for a long time. Oh, well let me get my booklet out and show you where we keep our information." You'd be surprised, it's just the conversation just hasn't happened. Maybe there hasn't been an opening.

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:27:07](#)

Yes. Well, yes. And I want to just highlight something you said, because I think it's so, so important, which is that even if nothing seems to happen, that it's still often getting things rolling in people's minds. Because I feel like I hear that a lot. They didn't want to talk about it, nothing happened. And I mean, sometimes I think just because of the way it was brought up. It may have created a lot of resistance, but I think it's actually to be expected

that these are weighty things that people often need some time to think over. And what's most common is that it takes a few tries, you have to cycle back to it a few times. And that things often are slowly moving forward even though it may not be super obvious. And that it's really not realistic to expect to sit down, open this conversation and have tons of things arranged or sorted out by the end of the hour and a half. I mean, when that happens, there have often been previous conversations that have been laying some of that foundation.

Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:28:10](#) It could be. I mean, I think if you do it not with intensity, you're going to have more success. Of course if your parent is very frail and they've had multiple hospitalizations and you still don't know who has power of attorney for healthcare, and you're an adult child, and you haven't been called by a hospital social worker to get that document done, there might be a little bit more intensity or urgency I guess, to have a little bit more information. And again, the holiday might not be the perfect time to bring it up depending on your timing. And again, I suggest that the day after the holiday, just say, "There's some things we want to talk about, mom," or, "dad, and we'll do that tomorrow." You could prepare them.

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:29:05](#) Yes, that we want to ask you about.

Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:29:07](#) Yes. We just want to know what you guys want if things go south, if you hit a pothole of life, what are your values? What's important to you? We want to make sure when somebody asks us, we know what you want.

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:29:24](#) Yes, or what you prefer. Because I feel like people often tell me, well I asked them what they wanted and they didn't answer or they said they didn't know. Yes, how do we help people get past that? I do hear that a lot and I think I understand. BeCause I think often, if we do ask people, "What do you want?" Initially they're like, "I want to stay well and independent in my house until the day I die." Right?

Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:29:45](#) Exactly. And that's-

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:29:48](#) And a little bit beyond that.

Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:29:49](#) And that's when I meet with somebody like that. I just met with a couple that had no children. I call them the orphan elders. And we talked about, well, if you can't live here anymore,

what kind of setting would you like? What's important to you? Do you want a garden? Do you want to have pets? Do you not like pets? Do you like socialization? So to get that conversation going and even if I get yes or nos, then I'm building up a plan actually without even sharing it with them, about what they're going to need to do. This couple that I was talking to that had no adult children, I had to help them find a private fiduciary and a geriatric care manager. They would bring in the private fiduciary, get the elder law attorney and help this older couple.

Linda Fodrini-Johnson:

[00:30:44](#) He obviously had had some strokes. He had been her caregiver. And they were really, really in a desperate situation. We're talking about adult children. At least there's family members willing to oversee and orchestrate some care plan for their parent when things do go south, like what happens for many individuals. Most of us just don't die in our sleep. You hear a couple of stories like that, probably a year. There's usually some medical incidents that happens. Sometimes it's a chronic issue that exacerbates itself, and there's another issue that falls upon that issue, so it becomes a medical triple deck sandwich.

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:31:35](#)

Right, right. Well, I mean, and I think that brings up another thing, is that these conversations about what would you prefer, again, take often several cycles and then often people have different ideas, or more specific ideas after they have gone through a crisis or an emergency, because it feels theoretical in a way, until then.

Linda Fodrini-Johnson:

[00:31:57](#) I met with one daughter, oh, sometime back, and she told me about her mom living in this beautiful Victorian in the Napa Valley, sounded ideal. The mother was actually born in that home and she said, "I'm not leaving here." And the daughter and I practiced some scripts that she could use with her mom. And she did. She told her mom that, "Mom, you've been independent, you've made good choices, but I don't want to make a choice. If you fall and break your hip, I don't want to choose a nursing home for you. So I want you to go look at a couple of places." Well, the mother had never, ever seen even assisted living. So she took her to see and the mother agreed to look, and said, "I'm never moving to one of those places. I'm living in my own home to until the end of my life."

Linda Fodrini-Johnson:

[00:32:50](#) And the daughter knew her mom was struggling to live in this big home. And about six months later, the daughter called me and she said, "Linda, you won't believe this, but my mother called me and said, you know that place," I'm just going to

make up a name, "Happy Valley on Hills? Well, I think I want to move there." So it percolated for her on how hard it was to manage that home and how easy it would be in that lovely garden view of probably a vineyard up in the Napa Valley that the daughter showed her. And she made the move. It took her six months to think about it.

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:33:27](#)

Yes. People often need some time, yes.

Linda Fodrini-Johnson:

[00:33:31](#) And the daughter had thought that she failed in that conversation, even though she took her mother to see these places that her mother said she hated, she chose one of them.

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:33:42](#)

Well, great. Well, so to recap, it sounds like it is important to have these conversations with aging parents, and that if siblings are coming together and that's going to be a time to have everyone in the same room because there is something to be said for people being able to see each other, then definitely doing it after the main holiday event, it's going to be better framing it as wanting to understand their preferences and values if something should happen. And realizing that people will often need some time to think about it and just, if nothing gets said or decided right then doesn't mean that it was a failure. Now the flip side is that sometimes I hear from older adults themselves that they feel like their kids are hounding them or hassling them. So do you have any suggestions for those older adults who ... What they can or might say to their families if they want to enjoy their holiday? What are some more constructive approaches?

Linda Fodrini-Johnson:

[00:34:46](#) Yes, it's interesting you ask that because I've been teaching a lot of classes lately about two older adults about aging with eyes wide open. Being alert to what this longer life might present to us and making some decisions before an issue arises in their life. So I'm talking to that group to a lot, more recently, and that does come up. But my kids are bugging me to move to retirement living. And I usually ask why. Do you want to? Do you need to? Is your house conducive for you to age in place in it? Do you need to do something to your house to make your children think is it safe for you? Do you need some, add some technology to your house that you're not on the floor overnight if you fall and break a hip, if you live alone?

Linda Fodrini-Johnson:

[00:35:39](#) Your children are worried about you, that's why they're asking you to make some changes. So I usually encourage them to have a family meeting, to call a family meeting, and let the

older adult call the meeting and maybe bring in an expert, bring in a care manager that could advocate for you on that you are able to take care of yourself, or maybe that you need to think about assisted living, or maybe even continuing care where you have all three levels of care. A lot of adult children like to know that their parents going to be in one place. And sometimes the older adults, the parents that called me in to have a meeting with their children, didn't realize all the options that were available to them. And again, it's just another opportunity for them to express what their wishes are, who's going to make decisions for them, who's that person that holds the power?

Linda Fodrini-Johnson:

[00:36:39](#) If it's one of the adult children, does that adult child really know that you don't want wrinkled sheets, or that you want a place where you could bring fluffy? Or a place to garden. A couple, a client of mine, she had dementia and he was a primary caregiver in their nineties mind you. And this guy plays tennis and he swims every single day. And he's 93. And he placed his wife. And he said he was never going to move. Placed his wife in a small care home. And he found a assisted living with the help of a care manager that had a swimming pool, and he still drives himself to play tennis. So his life, things that are important in his life are still there, but he's calling the shots. He made the decisions to do that with the support of his family and some advice of a professional.

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:37:40](#)

Right, right. So it sounds like to come back to for older adults who feel like my kids are bugging me, it sounds like first of all, I imagine we would say to older adults, you can tell them you don't want to be discussing this during the holidays. But to recognize that it is legitimate and understandable that they could envision a time when you, their aging parent, might need help. None of us like to think about that, but realistically looking around, everybody has a good chance of needing help. Some people will be lucky enough to not need it. And what do you propose for how you're going to, I guess, create a backup plan or assess what's going on and let your family know.

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:38:22](#)

Nobody should feel pestered. But if you're refusing to ever discuss it or consider it, you're leaving them without the understanding of what you might prefer. And that it also sounds like, I know that I would say this to everybody and I imagine you would too. But everybody should eventually make some kind of plan for their future in that, as you were saying, that allows you to stay more in control of the process. Right?

Better Health While Aging Podcast: 101 Avoiding Holiday Pitfalls with Aging Parents

Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:38:49](#) Right.

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:38:50](#) Because if you don't, there's still a good chance that something will happen and then other people will be making decisions for you, and you may or may not be able to be as involved as if you had been proactive before.

Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:39:03](#) Exactly. And it's so important to have those wishes articulated in your legal documents too, and that everybody knows where to find those legal documents, and everybody knows who's in charge. Who will be orchestrating the care needs for that parent, the mom, the dad or both of them.

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:39:27](#) Yes. Also thinking about something else that you mentioned, and just that this is the flip side of often we're advising adult children worried about their aging parents. And one of the things that I find myself saying over and over again, I've heard you say that too, is that, "We need to start by thinking, learning more about how the older parent sees it." But that the flip side here is if you're an older person being pressured by your kids or bugged by them, how are they seeing it? What exactly is leading them to be concerned? And how can you address that or renegotiate that? Right? They may have misconceptions about your health, perhaps because they haven't been very in the loop or maybe there actually is something that's worth acknowledging and making a plan to look into.

Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:40:15](#) Exactly. And at the same time, when I've been involved with a ... I'm thinking of a mother, daughter only child, a daughter, but very busy professional. Mom lived in a retirement community. She had macular degeneration, so her vision was poor. She lived in a community that had great transportation that she navigated quite successfully. She did live alone. But when I went to visit her, her house was immaculate. She was dressed like she was ready for a photo shoot. She looked absolutely wonderful, and she was really socially engaged with lots of activities.

Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:40:56](#) And the only suggestion I made was an emergency response system, which I said, "It would make your daughter feel better if you would accept something like that. And maybe a visit from me once every three months just to tell your daughter that you're mentally competent and you're physically well enough to take care of yourself." And then she wouldn't worry about you so often. And that was all that was necessary to keep her in her own home for, I think, she lived there another five years before she had a medical incident. But the daughter was seeing her mother as an

80 some odd year old, and just thought her mother should make a move then. And the mom was very, very happy with her lifestyle, and it was very much a very healthy lifestyle despite her visual challenges.

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:41:49](#)

So it sounds like it was an instance where just getting in an objective third party.

Linda Fodrini-Johnson:

[00:41:51](#) Exactly, yes.

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:41:53](#)

Is what was really helpful to the adult daughter. Well now I would love for us to spend a few minutes talking about something else that I know comes up a lot, which are sibling conflicts, right? So some people are the only child of aging parents, but also there are often several siblings involved, and that can create all kinds of issues. That's certainly come up in the membership at times, and we have conflicts over who's been doing what, or should be doing what.

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:42:20](#)

Or There's the designated child who's been there doing a lot of work, helping the aging parent and overseeing the care. And then everyone else comes in from out of town. And I know we often hear from those designated children that they feel that when everybody comes in from out of town for a holiday or event, they do nothing but complain or tell the designate child what they should be doing. I know that's another common set of issues that comes up. And then there's just people having different disagreements about what mom and dad needs. So can you maybe talk a little bit about some practical suggestions for our listeners on navigating these sibling challenges during the holidays?

Linda Fodrini-Johnson:

[00:43:02](#) Number one, if there's always been a disagreement every single holiday when everybody gets together, you might want to give your parent a gift and not have those disagreements rear their ugly head during the family holiday celebration. Again, could you have a conference call prior and talk about what the issues are with mom and dad? And designated child, sometimes you are the person that has the most burden. You have to set some boundaries of what you can and cannot do. And a lot of designated children are the good child. They've always been, I used to call myself Cinderella. I had three younger brothers and I always did everything my parents said I should do. I was the good one. They were acting out all the time and it really didn't give me any opportunity to act out. I just happened to play my role really well.

Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:44:05](#) And usually that designated child in a larger family is that same child that brought mom the Kleenex when her nose was running, or jumped up and got a blanket for anyone in the family that wasn't feeling well and napping. It's that person that just loves to care. And there's nothing wrong with that. But when it comes to taking care of an aging family member that's very needy and needs maybe daily care, or even three times a week visits, and somebody preparing meals and taking them to medical appointments, that adult child really needs to say, "I'm burdened. I can't do this anymore. I need some help." And to have that meeting to just try to be as honest as you can and forget all the sibling rivalry that happened when you were children, that your brother got to go to a better college, and parents didn't have enough money to send you to the same kind of college.

Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:45:04](#) I don't know what went on, but something goes on in family systems that seems to play out as we become adults. And then when it comes to parent care, it rears its ugly head again and no one even knows where the anger is coming from, or that criticism, that over critical sibling that's flying in from ... They live in Europe and they see mom twice a year, or dad twice a year, and they like to tell you what to do and what not to do. Or thinking that dad is just fine, he can drive and you know he's nicked the car several times and had it repaired as quickly as it's gotten into a fender bender. And he shouldn't be driving but they want dad to drive. So again, they don't want to. That other child doesn't want to see their parent is failing for whatever reason. And it could be they want to see their ...

PART 2 OF 3 ENDS [00:46:04]

Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:46:03](#) And it could be that they want to see their parent have autonomy, but you don't want autonomy versus an unsafe situation. And especially in the early stages of dementia. Some people are so socially appropriate when that adult son or daughter flies in that they haven't seen very often, they just seem to shine and seem just perfect and it's just so frustrating to that designated child that's thinking, oh my God, you're getting Saint Mom and I don't get that. I never get a thank you and she thanks you for coming, appreciates you so much for flying all the way here to just to see her for this holiday and on and on. And she never ever gives me any credit for anything I do.

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:46:54](#) Yes. And that's really common too. Well, to summarize your key suggestions, it sounds like, first of all, it can be a gift to your aging

parents to minimize the sibling squabbles. And so, one way to do that can be to be very intentional about having a call before and maybe really setting up a plan to address things afterwards or without exposing the aging parents to too much conflict. It sounds like if you're the designated child who's been doing a lot to think about speaking up and asking for help more constructively. And it sounds like also for siblings who are coming in from out of town that it can be good to just give your caregiving sibling the benefit of the doubt if at all possible because they are the ones who are there and I think often do know more.

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:47:47](#) I'm sure you've seen situations where they were actually mismanaging to a certain extent the situation or maybe too close to see what was needed, but often they almost always are putting it on a lot of time and effort.

Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:47:59](#) Right.

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:47:59](#) And that what they need most of all from their siblings is not ideas on what else to do but some support.

Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:48:08](#) Yes.

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:48:08](#) And then again, it sounds like if there are disagreements, during the holidays may not be the time to do it, but at some point thinking about would it be helpful to bring in, again, a professional objective, third party to help resolve the question of whether the caregiving sibling is actually on track or not and even to mediate some conversations. Does that sound about right?

Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:48:32](#) Yes. Perfect.

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:48:33](#) Okay, so now with our last, just for maybe like five minutes and then we should wrap up the episode, parents with dementia and memory problems, can we talk a little bit about that? Because I know people often want to have the usual fun holiday, but also people with dementia can find it harder to have big gatherings or changes to routine. So can you give some suggestions on how to avoid pitfalls and make the most of the holidays for those people who have a parent who has a diagnosis of Alzheimer's or similar dementia?

Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:49:05](#) Yes, definitely you want to take as much of the anxiety out of the holiday celebration as you can because that definitely overwhelms most people with dementia. Obviously

everybody is different and some people just always love a party. You do have the party, social people with dementia as well as the majority of people with dementia. Too much commotion causes anxiety and unrest and increases their confusion. One of the suggestions I've made for my families over the many years I've been working with families with someone with dementia, is to pick mom or dad up just before you're going to serve dinner. So they're not in the house the whole time that there's chaos and preparation. If in fact they tend to be anxious and get overwhelmed, again, you want to make it them to be part of the family celebration.

Linda Fodrini-Johnson:

[00:50:13](#) So the dinner or the meal is the most calm time, I would say that you're celebrating with foods that are familiar to them and hopefully foods that they can eat, got to watch that sodium. But again that you've planned the meal for mom or dad, maybe you don't have alcohol, that usually isn't something that's suggested for people with dementia, that you celebrate with a sparkling apple cider or something that everybody can toast to that holiday and still feel festive. And then right after dessert mom and dad is taken back to their home. So they're only in the celebration for a shorter period of time, it's not like it's a whole afternoon or whole day and gift-giving could be minimal, just maybe a few gifts exchanged. Again, that becomes overwhelming. Who gave me this? Where is it from? What am I going to do with it? I can't use this.

Linda Fodrini-Johnson:

[00:51:20](#) You don't want all that. You don't want to overwhelm people. And many of the older adults that, again, I've worked with feel bad because they have nothing to give in return. So if sometimes a grandchild or something could help that that older person was either shopping through a magazine or online with a grandparent and pick out little things for people if that's important to them, if it's always been important to them, help them do that. For my mother it was giving checks and then she would forget who she wrote checks to. I remember one year that three of the four children got checks, one didn't, it wasn't because she wanted to not give that person. It's just she forgot.

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:52:12](#)

Yes. Yes. It sounds like thinking about just keeping things simpler.

Linda Fodrini-Johnson:

[00:52:17](#) Simple.

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:52:18](#)

And shorter and trying to maintain their usual routine as much as possible. So it sounds like if it's at all possible, not having the whole party hosted in the person with dementia's home. Right?

Better Health While Aging Podcast: 101 Avoiding Holiday Pitfalls with Aging Parents

Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:52:30](#) Oh, yes.

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:52:30](#) I think sometimes people think, oh well we don't want them to have to travel or to move or to drive them somewhere. But that actually having a gathering and preparing a party usually involves a lot of people and changes to routine, which are hard for many people with dementia. So if the person with dementia lives in a special residence or facility, then as you were saying, pick them up right before the dinner and take them back afterwards. But if they're living at home or with somebody, it would be better to not have the whole holiday party there but instead host it at someone else's home.

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:53:05](#) That way the person with dementia can have their usual routine for as much as possible during the holidays. And then you bring them for a shorter period of time to join the family and try to keep things simple and not too long because we don't want them to get over tired.

Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:53:20](#) Exactly, and agitated usually.

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:53:23](#) And I think that's good because I think often people think, oh well we don't, we don't want them to travel or move. So we'll bring the party to them. That's well intentioned but can end up being quite stressful.

Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:53:33](#) It can be. Many grocery stores and supermarkets offer these packaged meals, the turkey, the ham or whatever, the leg of lamb, it's already cooked. You pick it up and you could bring it to their home. But if you're going to do that, make it again a shorter period of time. Somebody might just not want to go out but they still want their traditional holiday foods so you could do it that way. Again, making it shorter and simpler for people with dementia.

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:54:05](#) And since you mentioned sodium, I will just say that I feel like if there are any thoughts about that, asking the providers how important it is for them to minimize sodium. Just because not everyone with dementia is extremely sensitive to it, depends on their other health conditions. That in later life, daily pleasures are really important in eating food that tastes good is so important. So I always encourage families to talk to the health providers about what is really necessary in terms of changing the diet and how big an impact it will have on their short term health like today and over the next few months because sometimes it does make a big

difference an in another cases the time for prevention over the five year term is over and we do want people to enjoy their food.

Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:54:52](#) Yes. Yes.

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:54:53](#) I know for some families their parent seems to be having memory changes but has not been diagnosed. Any suggestions for families who encounter that?

Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:55:05](#) Well, again, you don't want to confront it the day of the holiday but the next day, especially if you're all on the same page and maybe mom was hosting the meal and forgot some important pieces and you're all seeing that dementia is definitely something that's presenting itself. You say the next day to mom, "Hey mom, we saw, we understand" or whatever terminology you want to use, "that sometimes you have a problem with memory and there are new medications out there that can help with your memory." Nothing's going to really stop Alzheimer's dementia.

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:55:48](#) Well, I usually say it's important to talk to the health providers about it because there are a variety of common health conditions that can make memory and thinking worse and let's go get checked for those is usually what I say. But as you were saying, not confronting them about it and being careful about reminding them or trying to correct any misconceptions they have, that's generally not helpful. And I'd be interested in what your usual advice is Linda, but I know for me, I tell people if they've noticed something and are worried, to focus mostly on just observing and maybe asking a few questions like, " Oh, I noticed you forgot that or that have, have you noticed any changes with your memory?" And just see what they say. And an awful lot of them will say, "No."

Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:56:41](#) Yes.

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:56:42](#) Or be defensive about it.

Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:56:43](#) Yes.

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:56:44](#) Because often people are either unaware or they are aware and they're quite frightened and quite defensive. But I tend to encourage people to really take a kind of like, let me just observe and gently try to figure out what they have noticed for themselves.

Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:56:59](#) Exactly.

Better Health While Aging Podcast: 101 Avoiding Holiday Pitfalls with Aging Parents

- Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:56:59](#) And how they're framing it and that it's not the time to try to get them to understand that they're forgetful or get them to understand that they've been doing this or that wrong. Or get them to understand that they have to get it even evaluated. It's just observing whatever you are noticing.
- Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:57:18](#) Right.
- Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:57:18](#) And the more specific you are, the more helpful it is to us as professionals. And actually we'll link to that in the show notes. The Common Causes of Cognitive Impairment, of Memory and Thinking Problems & the 10 Things the Doctor Should Check.
- Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:57:31](#) Oh yes, good.
- Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:57:32](#) So we'll put that, but I just say, start gathering the information but don't try to make them understand or believe or change anything.
- Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:57:40](#) And a lot of adult children or so in reality that they feel like they have to correct misinformation, the date is wrong or they call a grandchild by the wrong name. If you're constantly correcting, that person is not going to feel very good about the visit or themselves.
- Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:58:04](#) Yes.
- Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:58:04](#) So if it's not really important... a red light needs to be stopped at, that's important, that's dangerous. But anything that's not dangerous, not to correct.
- Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:58:18](#) Right. Yes. That's so true and such a good point. And just saying, "Don't you remember?"
- Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:58:26](#) Yes.
- Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:58:26](#) Either no they don't, it's not going to help them remember and it's just going to leave them feeling embarrassed. Which also brings up this other thing that I think people often don't know, but that as when people are developing memory problems, they will forget what exactly happened, but they won't forget the feeling.
- Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:58:42](#) Yes.
- Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:58:43](#) So when you are telling people, "Don't you remember, don't you remember?" No, they won't remember and they may not even

remember that you asked them, "Don't you remember?" but they will feel often embarrassed and that feeling of embarrassment or discomfort, will persist and they won't even be able to tell you or remember why they're feeling embarrassed.

Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:59:03](#) And that is why people refuse invitations. They remember they were embarrassed the last time they went in that setting. So if we want mom or dad to continue to be part of the family, again, try not to do that. It's really hard when you've had a different relationship for 50 or 60 years with this person that now you're going to interact with their conversation differently and you have to for their dignity and to respect them.

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [00:59:33](#) Yes.

Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [00:59:34](#) So it's really important. One of the things we didn't talk about, Leslie, is when you can't visit your parent for a holiday, what do you do? A friend of mine who's also a geriatric care manager, she has a blog that she wrote and I thought it was really some good ideas for send non-tech traditional things like cards. Older people that are alone and at distance buy them are really pretty card for that holiday.

Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [01:00:07](#) They love them. Calls, old fashioned phone calls, cookies or maybe some holiday food that you can mail that feel traditional in that person's holiday celebration, send them that. I thought those were great ideas and the other idea she had for these families is there's a app called Lots of Helping Hands. I don't know if you've hard of it.

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [01:00:34](#) Yes, yes, yes.

Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [01:00:35](#) You create a circle of care, start that. Because you can't get there, it gets the friends or neighbors or church people that can be a helping hand for that family member. Go grocery shopping for them, when they run out of something, somebody they could call. I thought that was a great idea.

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [01:00:57](#) Yes, yes. No, I loved all those ideas. One more that I would throw in, I know this has been nice for my family, is calendars with family pictures.

Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [01:01:08](#) Oh yes.

Better Health While Aging Podcast: 101 Avoiding Holiday Pitfalls with Aging Parents

- Leslie Kernisan, MD: [01:01:08](#) Make a very nice gift because everybody loves seeing pictures of their family. Right?
- Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [01:01:16](#) Yes, great idea. And my friend also had a technology idea that I thought was a good idea and that is a device that locates those lost glasses, keys.
- Leslie Kernisan, MD: [01:01:31](#) Do you have a particular one to recommend? It sounds convenient, but yes I'll have to look into what she recommends and see.
- Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [01:01:39](#) It's called Esky. E-S-K-Y Wireless Locator and I looked it up and it's only \$26 on Amazon so it's a pretty inexpensive fix that would be very handy for many of us, not just our aging family member.
- Leslie Kernisan, MD: [01:01:56](#) Right.
- Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [01:01:57](#) I think I'm going to put it on my list.
- Leslie Kernisan, MD: [01:01:59](#) On your wishlist for Santa, all right.
- Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [01:02:03](#) Yes, right.
- Leslie Kernisan, MD: [01:02:04](#) Speaking of gifts, we had a member or two ask if it's possible to gift membership in the Helping Older Parents Program and we are looking into how to arrange the logistics of that. But otherwise if you are struggling to help an aging parent or know somebody who is thinking about what would be helpful to them and that can be again, setting up Lots of Helping Hands or helping them just find a little bit of time off.
- Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [01:02:27](#) Yes.
- Leslie Kernisan, MD: [01:02:28](#) So yes, Linda, in closing, any last tips or suggestions that you have for people listening on better holidays with aging parents and avoiding common pitfalls?
- Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [01:02:38](#) There was another little resource and it was geriatric questions, a hundred questions that grandchildren could ask their grandparent. I thought that that was a great list and it's on homecareassistance.com website. You probably would just have to Google a hundred questions.
- Leslie Kernisan, MD: [01:02:59](#) Yes, we can find it and post a link to it.

Better Health While Aging Podcast: 101 Avoiding Holiday Pitfalls with Aging Parents

- Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [01:03:01](#) Yes. Yes. And like what was your first home like? What was the first movie you remember seeing? What was your first date like? Again, this is you're asking people that have better memories, these questions, but you can even try a few questions with people with dementia.
- Leslie Kernisan, MD: [01:03:20](#) Yes. They often remember things from long ago, much better than recent ones. Right. People are often so surprised by that.
- Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [01:03:25](#) Yes.
- Leslie Kernisan, MD: [01:03:25](#) That's actually to be expected. So yes. So that's nice to think that those questions could still even be asked even with an older parent or grandparent who is becoming a bit forgetful.
- Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [01:03:35](#) Yes. I thought that was a good idea.
- Leslie Kernisan, MD: [01:03:38](#) Yes.
- Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [01:03:38](#) I think last tips about enjoying the holidays to think about what are the holidays really about? They're about usually family and tradition and just try to keep a little of that without being overwhelmed. Simplify, I guess, connections.
- Leslie Kernisan, MD: [01:03:56](#) Simplify. Focus on connection.
- Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [01:03:58](#) Yes. Yes. And not try to get too much done. I know it's a time when everybody's together and you can talk about it, but make sure you have that peaceful holiday time to connect before you jump into making some plans about the tomorrows that we don't have any idea will come.
- Leslie Kernisan, MD: [01:04:23](#) Right, right. Yes. Planning is important but can be often put off until after the holidays.
- Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [01:04:28](#) Yes.
- Leslie Kernisan, MD: [01:04:29](#) So connecting and getting to know people is what is most important. Keeping things simpler is often a good idea because it just creates more space for that connection no matter what the state of people's health or minds.
- Linda Fodrini-Johnson: [01:04:43](#) I have some families that have eliminated gift-giving, they've told that to the older parent, they might give gifts but they

don't do it during that holiday time because that's overwhelming for many.

Leslie Kernisan, MD: [01:04:59](#)

Yes. So another suggestion that might be especially good for families where there's a parent with dementia. Yes. Great. Great. Well Linda, thank you so much as always, it's just such a treat to benefit from all your years of experience and of expertise. So really appreciate you helping me create this bonus episode, which hopefully will be helpful to lots of families so that they can get more connection out of the holidays and less stress and conflict.

Linda Fodrini-Johnson:

[01:05:27](#)

Yes, have a peaceful holiday, all of you.

About Dr. Kernisan's Helping Older Parents Membership:

In 2019, Dr. Kernisan began providing ongoing guidance and support to people helping aging parents through her unique Helping Older Parents Membership Program.

Members get access to twice monthly Q&A calls with Dr. K , a private forum featuring professional geriatric care managers, Dr. K's signature course on helping aging parents, and much more.

Learn more here: [About Dr. Kernisan's Helping Older Parents Membership](#).