

BABY BOOMERS ON THEIR OWN

By:
Judith S.
Parnes
LCSW,
CMC
Executive
Director



It is a very unusual feeling when as an adult, your last surviving parent dies. According to a projection from the Centers for Disease Control, at least 1.7 million Americans aged 65 and older will die in 2008: This will leave many adult “children” without their family of origin -- without the parents that they remember.

Unfortunately today many individuals die without a written plan or even a simple will. With no direction, family meeting, or wishes expressed, adult siblings must deal with

the death of a parent, many times at the expense of the family's harmony. Rather than pre-plan for death, it's not unusual for elderly parents to avoid discussing the matter. Thinking "*My kids can just deal with it after I am gone*" leads to undue stress for their survivors. When families are not prepared for the passing of its parents, three stages of grief are often evident. These include:

Humor - Dark humor is often some of the funniest. However, if underlying feelings are not addressed, they may become a constant reminder of some ill-perceived wrong that has been committed.

Greed - If gifts are not arranged prior to death, a sense of entitlement or need may alter a person's normal tendencies. This commonly causes

tension between siblings.

Estrangement-

Especially when family members do not live in close proximity, they may drift apart. It is easier to not speak to a family member than to resolve the issue at hand. Professionals such as hospice team members, clergy, grief and loss professionals and funeral directors and attorneys, can assist families through these difficult times.

In order to help your family avoid these stressful situations, it is recommended that you and/or your elderly parent have meetings that discuss specific wishes and prepare for the inevitable with the help of professionals. Written instructions and plans for the certainty of death will help your family tremendously.