



Caregiver Tip of the Month – August 2010

Notes from Area Agency on Aging of North Idaho

Helping Family members De-Clutter their homes:

Clutter can creep up on us, and can lead to problems. We all feel the frustrations of clutter, but the elderly can become overwhelmed and paralyzed trying to organize it all. It is often hard to get rid of things—newspapers that need to be read, bills and ads that might be important or just of interest, items that have sentimental value, things that might be used in the future, or even just “comforters” for the loneliness. But such reasons for keeping things become road blocks. Fatigue or changes in health take precedence. Simple choices become compounded and clutter becomes a major issue.

When we see it in our parent’s home, it is often the “elephant in the room”. They don’t acknowledge it because of embarrassment. We don’t want to embarrass them or tell them how they should live. Most often the clutter is just a burden gotten out of hand.

You can help them devise some strategies. Help dad clean off a table and cheer the success together. Be creative and suggest to mom that ¼ of the saved butter tubs be given to a school for student art projects. Help mom pack up clothes and other items, and keep a list of each item. Agree that if they are not used in 6 months she will donate them to charity. Try sorting items into 3 tubs—one to donate, one to sell, one to keep. With a bit of help, your family member can de-clutter their home and lessen their stress, reduce their anxiety and feel in control again.

Contact Betsy Bullard, Area Agency on Aging, at 667-3179, ext. 222, or email infoassist@aaani.org to find out more about these options and other resources. For expanded caregiver tips go to our website at www.aaani.org and click on Family Caregiving on the left hand side of the home page.