

Foreword

by Yan Ross

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When Matt Gurwell asked me to write this Foreword for purposes of introducing the “Beyond Driving with Dignity” family workbook, I was very pleased. Matt and I first connected through one of my own facilities that provides resources on intergenerational issues, and this workbook fills a long-standing gap in the ways to support efforts to deal with driving issues among senior family members.

Before going on, I wish the “Beyond Driving with Dignity” workbook had been available when I faced the “Beyond Driving with Dignity” situation with my Dad (in his 70’s), my Mom (in her 80’s), and my Mother-in-Law (in her 90’s). With much effort, and varying degrees of success, we managed to get them each beyond driving, but with the dignity that comes from continued independence and self-worth. But it was strictly trial and error, since we had no support from anyone who had traveled this road before.

That’s the personal side of it, and in my professional work on behalf of adult children with aging parents, I’ve encountered this challenge on a regular and continuing basis. Now there is a proven method and process for families to deal with this common challenge to peace in the family.

What is the “Beyond Driving with Dignity” situation? If you have already experienced it, you’ll recognize the signs: a senior member of the family is beginning to have some driving safety issues. Conversation about it may be difficult – reluctance on one side and defensiveness on the other may lead to an emotional impasse. Whether you are the senior in the family or an adult child, it’s important to recognize that the situation is going to require good faith and cooperative effort from everyone in the family.

For the senior driver, the issues revolve around independence, personal freedom, emotional dignity, and family status. For the adult children, safety and financial risk concerns, responsibility for transportation and personal needs, and other family dynamics come into play. For all family members, there is a great deal of emotional freight, and the need for a means of coming to grips with the underlying issues in a loving and caring way.

Whether you are an adult child or a senior member of your family, “Beyond Driving with Dignity” is a family workbook that will support your efforts to evaluate and implement a program to keep your family safe and driving habits positive.

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Establishing and agreeing on appropriate driving practices for seniors can be a great challenge in any family. The trial and error method often leads to communications failure and hardened opposition. But fortunately, this is a road that has been traveled before, and the “Beyond Driving with Dignity” workbook provides a means and method for cooperative effort and success for your family.

As a companion effort to help families in this process, the author has established a certified training program for professionals to work with families using the workbook as a resource and guide. Your inquiries will be received and referrals for this service will be provided through the online facility of Keeping Us Safe, LLC, at www.keepingussafe.org.

It’s fair to mention at this point that if you have not encountered the “Beyond Driving with Dignity” situation, you probably will – if you drive and you are aging, or have an aging member of your household who drives. You may not have reached that stage, or you may know someone whose family is in need of this resource. If not right now, in time, it’s predictable that this workbook will be relevant for you or someone you know.

In my intergenerational work with families over more than 30 years, I have met few people as dedicated and caring as Matt Gurwell, the creator of this workbook. Based on his career as a State Highway Patrol Officer and Lieutenant, he has personally helped so many families in facing the “Beyond Driving with Dignity” challenge; but being only one person, it was impossible to convert his experience to a system that could be understood and applied by families. That’s why Matt made the decision to write this workbook -- and also to create the training program under which professionals are certified to work with families using the workbook as a resource and guide.

I am pleased to invite you to read on, and to take full advantage of the “Beyond Driving with Dignity” program.

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