



Making “Taking Care of Mom” a Top Priority

by Cheri Gregory

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If we were sitting at my kitchen table enjoying cups of tea together, while passing fresh banana bread I'd say, “Repeat after me: **I am the only mother my child has!**”

You'd probably look at me like I'm nuts and quickly set down your tea, wondering if you should even take a bite of my banana bread—who knows what I put in it?

Normally, I try not to be overly pushy. I like to listen and ask questions. But not today. Today, I'd turn bossy. Here's why:

I have a naturally chaotic personality. We've paid vast late fees because “staying on top of” the bills was beyond me until the invention of online banking. Before my husband stepped in, our cars never had oil changes, and engine lights stayed on for weeks (or until the car stopped!)

But the one thing I always stayed on top of was my kids' appointments: dental, doctor, orthodontist, vaccinations, TB tests. You name it, it was on the calendar and done on time. I never wanted my children to suffer ill effects of my neglect, so I was hyper-vigilant.

Before you name me Responsible Mom of the Year, guess who...

- ...wore her final pair of 2 week contact lenses for 2 months (until they tore!) because she had “no time” to see the ophthalmologist?
- ...used emergency wax to stick a crown back on a tooth for so long she ended up needing a root canal?
- ...kept taking Prilosec, thinking she had an ulcer, instead of seeing a doctor for what turned out to be gal stones? (While sitting with her in the ER, her father reminded her that “she who self-diagnoses has a fool for a doctor and a fool for a patient!”)
- ...went five years with debilitating cramps and out-of-control bleeding because she didn't want the “hassle” finding a new doctor? (Not 'til she had to wash her jeans in a public restroom did it dawn on her, “Finding a new doctor has *got* to be easier than *this!*”)
- ...I routinely ignore when it comes to medical and dental care?

You guessed it. ***The only mother my children have.***

Common Obstacles to “Taking Care of Mom”

- Cost.** Medical care—even “just” preventative (and even with insurance)—costs money. But many untreated conditions get worse over time and eventually cost far more than they would have if they’d been treated earlier. One mom of ten I knew is dead now because she never sought medical care for herself. Her children no longer have their one and only mother, and her grandchildren will never know their grandma. This is the ultimate cost.
- Time.** We lavish time on everyone else but fret over the 30 minutes it takes to shower and do our hair, or the 2 hours it takes for a doctor appointment. Somehow, we have this false notion that it’s a waste to spend time on ourselves. We need to see this time as an investment, not a waste!
- Fear.** When we have symptoms we don’t understand, it’s normal to start worrying. All sorts of “what if?”s crop up: *What if it can’t be treated? What if it’s incurable, and I just have to learn to live with it?* **We need to ask the opposite questions, too:** *What if it **can** be treated? What if I **don’t** have to live with it?* Turns out, there was a name for my condition (menorrhagia) and a treatment (endometrial ablation) that worked! Oh, how I wish I hadn’t waited five long miserable years.
- Inconvenience.** As moms, we try not to “make waves” with family members. (There are usually enough family waves to make everyone seasick without us adding to the nausea!) Coming home with a numb mouth or dilated pupils (requiring someone to drive for us!) or orders for medical testing will inconvenience various family members, and we don’t want to “put them through all that.” So, we become masters of “minimizing,” telling ourselves, “Oh, it’s no big deal.”
- Resources.** Money is a major issue. So is insurance. Often, we worry that we don’t have “enough” and rationalize that since we don’t have “enough” there’s no use even making the appointment in the first place. Or perhaps we don’t even have a primary care physician (or dentist or OB/Gyn), and the task of finding a new one – one as good as our last one (or one we don’t hate as much as the last one!) – feels overwhelming.

Sometimes the first step is to simply explore our options: How much will the visit cost? Can we make payments? What does our insurance cover? What free or low-cost services are available to us? Who can we ask for referrals to service providers they’ve liked?

Instead of doing nothing, do something – just one thing – to start getting you over, under, and around these obstacles!



Quick “Taking Care of Mom” Questions:

- Do I need to see my OB/Gyn? When was my last pap smear? Are there any “issues” I need to bite the bullet and talk about? How about a mammogram?
- Is it time for me to see my dentist? When was my last full set of x-rays? How are my “watched” teeth doing? Am I still wearing any “temps” that should be permanent crowns by now?
- How long since my last teeth cleaning? Do I have a new toothbrush? Plenty of floss? Am I brushing and flossing thoroughly several times a day? How healthy are my gums?
- When did I last see the ophthalmologist? Have my eyes dilated? Do I have a good pair of glasses or is it time for a new prescription? Do I have plenty of contacts on hand so that I’m tossing them when I’m supposed to? How’s my supply of lens solution?
- Is it time for me to see a chiropractor, massage therapist, or physical therapist to deal with an injury that’s causing persistent pain? Do I need a new set of stretches? Strengthening exercises? a Theraband routine? Pilates? Yoga?
- Do I need a routine physical to have all systems checked out? How about blood work; do I have baseline values so I know what “normal” is for me?
- What symptoms have I been ignoring for a while, hoping they’d go away on their own?

What appointment needs to be made TODAY?

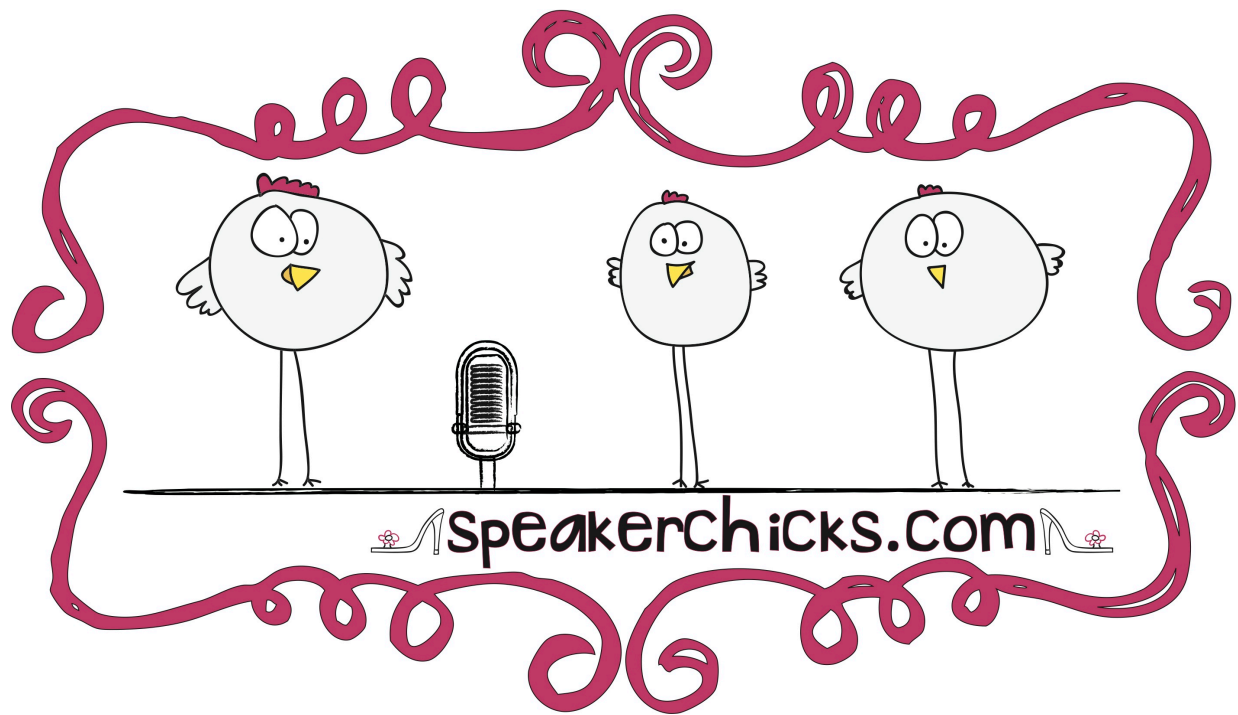
Take the “Taking Care of Mom” Pledge for Your Children

- 1st Stand in front of a mirror.
- 2nd Say aloud, “I will take care of ____’s mother. She’s the only mother (s)he’s got.” Repeat for each of your children.
- 3rd Put yourself at the top of your To Do list.

Now make the call(s).

Engaging, entertaining, and enthusiastic, Cheri Gregory connects women to the transforming power of God’s love. A story-teller extraordinaire, Cheri draws from Scripture and personal experiences that resonate with women’s frustrations, fears and failures, bringing hope that they are *not* alone and inspiring courage that they *can* grow beyond their circumstances.

Married since 1988 to her opposite Personality, Daniel, a pastor, teacher, and musician, Cheri is an English teacher and the mother of two college-age kids (who are also opposite Personalities): Annemarie and Jonathon.



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