

Family Caregiver Newsletter

Newsletter Date April 2015

The Powerful Caregiver

This column is named after the class "Powerful Tools for Caregivers," a six-session workshop on helping caregiving families thrive (not just survive). It is offered in Racine County several times a year.

What is Patience?

Donald is an 85-year-old retired salesman who has been married to his beautiful wife Diana for 63 years. Diana has severe memory loss that she doesn't remember having. She refuses to see a doctor for any reason, so, although she was diagnosed with dementia several years ago, she is on no medication and no more specific diagnosis. Lately Diana has been angry at Donald for no apparent reason. Although he asks her "What did I do?" she just yells, "You know" with a look of hate in her eyes. Donald prays for patience many times a day. Nevertheless, sometimes he yells at Diana and bangs his fist on the counter. Then he feels bad.

Michelle is a 35-year-old mother of two children and caregiver to her mother Elaine, who has had Multiple Sclerosis for many years. Elaine needs help getting out of bed, dressing, and getting into her wheelchair and the car. Michelle assists her mom and supervises her children's preparations for school and adult day services as well as getting ready for work. Many mornings she yells at all three of

her family members and leaves the house with a headache and a heavy heart. Work and evenings don't go any better. She often awakens at night and worries about the future, her health and her mother's, and the well-being of her children. At those times she cries and vows to "be more patient in the morning." Morning often brings a buildup of tension and emotions that eventually spew out of her in angry words again. "I just need to be patient," she tells herself through her tears.



Often life events may not proceed as planned.

Patience may involve: slowing down, waiting; keeping a calm, caring demeanor; letting things "roll off your back" choosing words carefully; accepting what is; accepting what you cannot do (e.g. changing another person); being nonjudgmental; forgiving yourself and others.

Patience is lost when anger takes

Inside this issue:

What is Patience?	1
Community Resources	3
Support Groups for Family Caregivers	4
Caregiver Opportunities	4



Two Eruptions
Photograph by James
Appleton, Your Shot
National Geographic

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continued from front page

over. Anger is like a volcano with lava made from building emotions like hurt, frustration, and feeling overwhelmed or trapped.

These emotions are a natural reaction to the stressors in our life. For family caregivers, they have an extra potency and build up tremendous pressure. I think of those lava-like feelings as getting bigger and bigger, putting pressure on the logical part of my brain where impulse control dwells. If the lava below isn't dealt with, anger takes over, and words and actions spew out uninvited by my thinking self.

Surprisingly, after the volcano has erupted, there can be a sense of relief, equilibrium, and the desire to seek solutions. But patience cannot just be found, and kept tucked away in a safe place. It must be practiced. That means even when things seem to be going well, we need to tend to those underlying emotions as well as physical messages that indicate stress. That means I must take gentle, compassionate care of ME, however I am able to do that. Patience must be practiced again and again, like learning a piece of music. Here are a few recommended practices:

Relaxation techniques like deep, belly-breathing, stopping a moment to enjoy looking out the window, sitting or walking meditation, prayer for guidance.

Respite – time away from stressors and overwhelming responsibility. You can be relieved by a friend or family member, volunteer, experienced paid caregiver, group respite program, or even a temporary stay in a care facility for

your loved one. Call the ADRC for suggestions that fit your needs.

Gratitude – think of or write a list of five things you are grateful for (in hard times, I try to think of twice as many, and I've never come up short).

Exercise from walking around your house just to get moving to joining your care receiver in an exercise video, an outdoor walk, yoga or Tai Chi, or workout at the gym. Whatever works for you. **Anything** is a lot better than nothing!!

Talking with someone who understands – a “listening buddy” who is familiar with family caregiving; a professional counselor or clergy person.

Music – listen to what feeds your soul; sing; whistle, play an instrument, dance or whatever brings joy to your soul

Education – learn about the disease, what to expect, how equipment and modifications can help you cope, and what has worked for others.

Compassionate self-care - Be gentle and forgiving to yourself. Treat yourself as you do other human beings who are struggling and meeting challenges. Give yourself a hug and a pat on the back, and say, “I am doing my best, and right now that is good enough.”

Using your “duck suit”! Ducks have feathers that keep them warm and dry, even in the coldest, rainiest weather. If they let their feathers get ruffled, they get all wet. Caregivers often need protection from being hurt

... continued from page 2

and upset by things that are said or done. It helps to remember the words, “Don’t take it personally” and “It is the disease causing the problem, not my loved one.” If a small reminder of your “duck suit” would be helpful, you may pick up your own little rubber ducky at a Caregiver Support group or at the ADRC office.

Here are some ways Donald and Michelle found to practice patience:

Donald – calling the ADRC; accepting respite time and other support offered by friends and his church community; attending support groups; learning

about dementia and communication skills; letting go of the need to reason with Diana; and, yes, Donald uses his duck suit!

Michelle: Meditating for a few minutes in the morning; calling the ADRC and hiring help in the home for her mother in the morning and evening; taking walks during her breaks at work; sharing her feelings with someone at work and being referred to an Employee Assistance Program professional.



Community Resources

This column highlights some of the many resources in our community. [For more, see the Community Resource Directory](#) available from the Aging and Disability Resource Center (262-833-8777) or www.adrc.racineco.com.

Caregiving Relationships

A Series of workshops designed to prepare family caregivers to:

- Practice self-care
- Communicate effectively
- Manage complex emotions
- Deal with losses
- Solve problems creatively
- Use community resources wisely
...and much more

Saturdays: May 16, 23, and 30, 2015 - 10:30 AM – 12:30 PM

**Atonement Lutheran Church
2915 Wright Ave, Racine**

\$10 for the series will cover supplies and refreshments (Scholarships are available) For further information or to register, call Marilyn Joyce at 262-833-8764.

Book Corner:

If you do not have it already, **Daily Comforts for Caregivers** by Pat Samples, published by Fairview Press, is an excellent source of support for many caregivers. There is a short reading for every day of the year on a variety of topics common to family caregivers. Some that pertain to “What is Patience”, are:

- “Crabbiness” (June 3)
- “Impatience” (June 11)
- “Bad Moods” (July 13)
- “Vocal Release” (September 6)
- “Rage as Energy” (November 8)

A limited number of copies are available free of charge from the ADRC. Please call 262-833-8764, if you’d like a copy mailed to you. This wonderful book can also be purchased online, from the publisher, or at bookstores. The price is around \$12-15. It is a very wise investment!

“Love isn’t a state of perfect caring. It is an active noun like struggle.”

-Fred Rogers





14200 Washington Ave
Sturtevant, WI 53177

Caregiver Opportunities

Caregiver Consultations:

Tasha Orr-Holmes of the Alzheimer’s Association will be starting the monthly ADRC care consultations in May for families dealing with any type of dementia.

Tasha will be here the 4th Thursday of every month from 10:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. We will schedule 2 one hour appointments every month—For 2015 in the months of June and December, Tasha will be here on the 3rd Thursday of the month (same time).

To schedule an appointment with Tasha contact Felicia at 262-833-8761.



Support Groups for Family Caregivers

First Thursday 10:30 am-12 Noon

April 2nd

Alzheimer’s Association Group

For Families Dealing with Alzheimer’s and other Dementias
2000 Domanik Dr, 1st Floor United Way conference room

First Friday 12 Noon-1pm “Caregiver Connection”

Telephone Group

April 3rd

Call 262-833-8762 to pre-register

Second Tuesday 1:30-3:00 pm

April 14th

Yorkville United Methodist Church

17645 Old Yorkville Rd. (3 Miles West of I-94, Just N of Highway 20)

Second Saturday 10:30 am–12 Noon

April 11th

Atonement Lutheran Church

2915 Wright Ave

Park and enter in back of building (on South side)

Third Wednesday 1:30-3:00 pm

April 15th

Burlington Senior Center, Eppers Room

209 N Main St

Third Thursday 6:00-7:30 pm

April 16th

Alzheimer’s Association Group

For Families Dealing with Alzheimer’s and other Dementias
Atonement Lutheran Church, 2915 Wright Ave
Park and enter in back of building (on South side)