

Family Caregiver Newsletter

Newsletter Date February 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.

Change the Frame (or hang a new picture)

A Tale of Two Hours in the Life of a Family Caregiver

OH, NO!! Is it really morning already? After a fitful night, I yawn, stretch, and curse the Charlie-horse in my leg. Ready or not, I must take care of my family. My mother, who has dementia and diabetes, lives with me and my children. They'll all need my attention soon. Today will be challenging. Mom has a medical appointment, I need to make a salad for the Community Meal, and I have a big report due at work. Thank goodness my brother will take Mom to her appointment and drop her off at Adult Day Care. Oh yes, and there are a bunch of papers to be signed by me and sent to school with the children. **"How can I do all of this one more day?"** I think on the way to the kitchen.

I hear Mom in the bathroom. **"I hope she doesn't use half a roll of**

paper again, but I bet she will, just because I have so much to do this morning," you mutter in your head. You manage to get the coffee pot going and reach for a pen, when there is a call from the bathroom. "Honey, the toilet overflowed." **"Just as I suspected,"** I mutter between clenched teeth.

After that predawn crisis, it's time to wake the children.

They emerge from their dreams fighting over everything they encounter. I sigh and return to the kitchen to make breakfast and sign those papers. The phone rings. It's my brother. His son was injured in a game last night, and he can't take Mom to the medical appointment. **"Oh, drat! Can't I depend on ANYBODY? He takes Mom one day a week, but he should do**



Inside this issue:

Change the Frame	1
Community Resources	3
Support Groups for Family Caregivers	4
Caregiver Opportunities	4



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continued from front page

more. Why can't HE find a ride for her today? Why do kids have to play sports so much? Why don't coaches keep them safer!" I think bitterly.

I call my sister and ask her to drive Mom. She can't. She has a tennis game at that time. "**@&#**!!!!!"** I think as my brain explodes, my heart races, and my blood pressure peaks. "**That brat always did get her own way about everything. She doesn't even have to work. She wouldn't care if Mom missed her appointment and went into a coma. Now I'll have to take time off, and the boss will be mad. It's all up to me now. I have to get her there.**" By now my head is pounding, and my hands shake as I butter toast.

Somehow I manage to send the children off to school. Then I check Mom's blood sugar, give her insulin, and begin the long negotiation with her about getting dressed. "**She's just stalling. She knows I'm under a lot of stress right now. She just wants more of my attention.**" says a voice in my head. I raise my voice, and Mom gets slower and clumsier.

The doorbell rings, and it's a lady from church here to pick up the salad. She doesn't seem to understand why it's not ready. "**She can just DO GOOD all day because she doesn't have to do what I do; No one understands what caregiving is like. That salad lady wouldn't last five minutes in my shoes, and neither**

would my sister! Sometimes I just want to give up!" says the voice louder and louder,

Then my eyes fall on those papers I was supposed to send to school. "**I'm such a bad parent! Did I even kiss my kids good-bye this morning? Some parents put nice little notes in their kids' lunches, but mine are lucky if I remember the food. I'm just so inept and scatterbrained. My kids deserve better**". These thoughts are accompanied by tears and sobs. I have flunked today, and it's only 9:00.

At this point I might say to myself (like Alexander in the delightful children's book):

"Today is a terrible, horrible, no good, very bad day!" And I could go on: "**Yesterday was no good either, and I can only IMAGINE what awfulness tomorrow will bring! Everything is just against me.**"

OR

I could take a deep breath, reframe this morning's negative thinking patterns, and empower myself to find a solution-based plan.

Negative thinking can seem like our defense against a sense of failure, but it really is a barrier to seeing the good in life. Reframing or "putting a fresh spin on things" takes a settled mind, and a willingness to give up a wall of defensiveness. It involves:

- ◆ Returning to the present moment and focusing on what is challenging and what is good there.

... continued from page 2

- ◆ Giving importance to help that is offered, no matter how small
Sharing the burden of being right with others!
- ◆ Blaming the disease for behavior, not the person living with it.
- ◆ Seeking and using resources and solutions like: reaching out for Caregiver Support; rescheduling Mom's appointment; asking for help from people at church; considering a change in living arrangements.
- ◆ Having an affirmation – a positive, uplifting, statement like:
I'm doing my best, and that's good enough.

A good affirmation is positive, possible, grounded in the present, and can be stated with passion. Many people post them around their home, vehicle, or work space. You can make one of your own!

May your here and now be blessed!



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.

Racine Art Museum invites you to join us for our FREE - **SPARK!** - Cultural programming for people with memory loss and their caregivers.

Funded by a grant from the Helen Bader Foundation, these programs provide enriching art experiences at our museums, including hands-on art activities, art conversations, poetry, dance, and movement.

Friday, February 13: *Heart and Soul*
10:00 - 11:30 am

Call 262.636.9177 to register. Held at RAM's Wustum Museum
2519 Northwestern Ave, Racine

Friday, March 13: *Watercolor Wisconsin 2014: Inside/Outside*
10:00 - 11:30 am

To register call 262.636.9573 or email tblasko@ramart.org.
Held at RAM's Wustum Museum
2519 Northwestern Ave, Racine

Friday, April 10: *Shall We Dance?*
10:00 - 11:30 am

To register call 262.636.9573 or email tblasko@ramart.org.

Held at RAM's Wustum Museum
2519 Northwestern Ave, Racine

Friday, May 8: *Krazy about Kids: The Racine Unified Student Art Exhibition*
10:00 - 11:30 am

Call 262.636.9177 to register. Gallery Engagements are held at Racine Art Museum, 441 Main St, Racine.

Please check the respite and leisure sections of the Community Resource Directory for other ideas of things you and/or your care-receiver can participate in.

Call the ADRC at 262-833-8777 if you do not have a copy of this resource.

*May I have...
Serenity to
accept the things
I cannot change,
Courage to
change the things
I can, and
Wisdom to know
the difference.*





14200 Washington Ave
Sturtevant, WI 53177

Caregiver Opportunities

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: March 7, 14, and 28
10:30 AM – 12:30 PM**

**Atonement Lutheran Church
2915 Wright Avenue**

\$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



Support Groups for Family Caregivers

First Thursday 10:30 am-12 Noon

February 5th

Alzheimer's Association Group

For Families Dealing with Alzheimer's and other Dementias
Lincoln Lutheran Office Bldg, 2000 Domanik Drive, 4th Floor

First Friday 12 Noon-1pm "Caregiver Connection"

Telephone Group

February 6th

Call 262-833-8762 to pre-register

Second Tuesday 1:30-3:00 pm

February 10th

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

February 14th

Atonement Lutheran Church

2915 Wright Ave

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

Third Wednesday 1:30-3:00 pm

February 18th

Burlington Senior Center, Eppers Room
209 N Main St

Third Thursday 6:00-7:30 pm

February 19th

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)