

Family Caregiver Newsletter

Newsletter Date June 2013

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.

Tips for Caregiving Trips

As summer finally promises to become a reality in Wisconsin, many caregiving families may be considering the pros and cons of whether, when, and how to travel with a care receiver. Your situation may be similar in some ways to the following stories:

Tony is a 62-year-old caregiver to his 60-year-old wife Lynn, who has multiple sclerosis. Lynn uses a wheelchair for mobility and they have a van with a lift. She needs Tony's help in the bathroom. The couple's children live in a city several hundred miles away. They would like to see the children and grandchildren this summer. Tony has some misgivings about traveling. Last year, when he went into the ladies' room to help Lynn, a woman coming out of the bathroom screamed and called him a terrible name. Yet he doesn't want to let the summer go by without playing catch with his grandson!

Mary lives with her 85-year-old mother Eva, who has dementia. They want to visit Mary's sister who lives a two-day drive away. Last year they made the trip, but it was difficult. As the miles went by, Eva became more and more restless and disoriented. At a rest stop she bolted, and Mary had to chase her. She drove to the nearest hospital, and staff there found that Eva was dehydrated and had a bladder infection. Mary was given medication and instructions to make sure Eva drank more wa-

ter. Eva was not up to her usual functioning during that whole trip, and Mary was totally exhausted.

Traveling as a caregiver entails a lot of work. So you need to decide whether you and your loved one will gain enough benefits from the trip to outweigh the effort. You need to assess whether your loved one is too physically frail or too unable to understand his or her surroundings to benefit from a journey. Don't go just because you feel obligated. And enlist the help of someone who can accompany you if at all possible. Here are a few tips to making your trip as pleasant and refreshing and possible:



Travel can open doors for both caregiver and care receiver if well planned.

Planning Your Trip (Several weeks ahead)

- Consider pros and cons of car, air, or other transportation (see next page).
- Plan to travel at a time of day when your care receiver is generally alert and content.
- Schedule any necessary medical appointments well ahead of your planned travel time if at all possible. If medication changes are made, you'll need time to fill

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Happy and Safe Trails continued from front page

the new prescription and determine how it works for your loved one.

- Ask your doctor for a written medical summary of your loved one's condition. This can serve as a baseline for other medical professionals, should they be needed. It also may help if you find it necessary to change arrangements for transportation.
- If your loved one has any dementia, consider enrolling in Safe Return and Safe Assured programs. Wandering behavior and just becoming lost are much more common when people are out of their usual routine and environment.

Preparing to Travel

- Go through all medications and refill prescriptions as they will be needed while you are away and when you first return home. Pack more than enough medication for your planned stay. Put it in luggage that will be easily accessible during your travel (NOT in checked baggage).
- Pack clothing that is comfortable and easy to put on, and pack extra!
- Prepare a "pocket packet" for your care receiver that can hold: His/her name (including any familiar nickname); your name and cell phone number; other emergency contacts; and where you will be staying each day,
- Pack a Caregiver Bag for you to carry that contains: change of clothes, insurance cards, physician's phone number, medications for the day, a medication list and a description of your loved one's health condition, e.g., a wallet card from the Alzheimer's Association.

On the Road

- Take bathroom and exercise breaks at least every two hours.
- Make sure you both get plenty of fluids and a balanced diet with plenty of fiber.
- Keep doors and windows locked, and be alert for signs of restlessness.
- Provide a soothing environment with your voice, music, or gentle touch, and a comfortable temperature.
- If at all possible, take an extra person

along!

- Have calming medications handy if they are prescribed.
- Avoid heavy traffic if possible.

In the Air

- Consider reserving an aisle seat for you or your care receiver.
- Try to meet your loved one's need to stand and move according to ability.
- Use touch, a calming voice, and a sense of humor to put your companion at ease.

While Visiting

- Remember that any strange environment may trigger restlessness and/or delirium.
- Try to keep the routine for your loved one as nearly like home as possible.
- Encourage family to visit in small groups. Crowds can be confusing and upsetting.
- Be prepared for some family members to be in denial about your loved one's losses, and some to have a lot of advice for you! Take what is useful and let the rest go.

Home Again

Expect that it could take a few days for your loved one to readjust. This is true whether or not his or her condition involves dementia. Traveling is tiring for all of us (and be patient with your own tendency to feel tired and out of sorts, too!) Resume your normal routine as soon as possible. Enjoy the good memories that your trip evokes, and remind yourself that you are doing a good job!!

"Should we drive or fly?"

Some ideas to consider:

Car

Pro: You can stop for breaks, and exercise when you need to. You'll have less worry about deadlines. Your care receiver has some space and can see outside. You can control the noise level. You have more space to pack needed supplies and equipment.

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Con: Restless people have attempted to open doors and windows (it is not advisable to take care receivers with dementia on car trips without a third person.) The journey takes longer. There may be overnight stays in strange places. The caregiver/driver may become fatigued.

Air

Pro: Travel time is usually shorter. There are Family Restrooms at airports (convenient for helping someone else). You can ask for a wheelchair and escort. (Wheelchairs are given priority in the security line.) Onboard staff can meet some of your special needs, especially if you call the airline ahead of time.

Con: Long flights may result in long periods of sitting. It may be harder to maintain a

nutritious diet and adequate hydration. Seating may be cramped and cause the care receiver to be restless. There may be uncontrollable noise nearby (yes, babies may cry a lot!).

Tony may benefit by knowing that most people nowadays are accustomed to encountering family members helping someone in the bathroom and are not rude about it. Caregivers have found that staff at rest stops will sometimes close an area to the public so that a caregiving family can have privacy.

Air travel may prove to be more convenient than a tedious car trip for Mary and Eva this year.



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.

If your care receiver does not normally use a wheelchair for travel but this might possibly be more convenient for long distance travel, consider renting an accessible van through **Wheelchair Getaways**. Call toll free 866-748-3004. See page 45 in the Community Resource Directory.

You can also find information on other forms of travel including tour providers. See page 87.

Consider:

Amtrak 800-872-7245
www.amtrak.com

Greyhound 800-231-2222
www.greyhound.com

Abel Trek Tours 800-205-6713
[Www.abletrektours.com](http://www.abletrektours.com)

Road Scholar Program
(Elderhostel)
800-454-5768 or
www.elderhostel.com

Search Beyond Adventures
800-611-0402 or
www.searchbeyond.com

We have quite a few printed resources available to be mailed to you free of charge. Topics include **Care for the Caregiver, Caregiver Tips and Techniques, Local Resources, Memory Loss and Dementia**, and more. If you would like a list of these, please call Marilyn at 262-833-8764.

A supply of large garments for incontinent protection has been donated for use by caregiving families. Call 262-833-8764 if you could use some of them.

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



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**Program: What to do
About Mom (Dad)?**

These words can drop you to your emotional knees. If they sound familiar, this program is for you. You'll have a positive, uplifting experience and leave with ready-to-use ideas to solve real problems.

Speaker: Mary Sharp
Thursday, June 6th 2013
6:00 to 7:00 pm
Gateway Technical College
Kenosha Campus
Bio-Science Bldg Rm 120
3520 30th Ave, Kenosha

RSVP by June 4th to the
ADRC of Racine County at
262-833-8777.

What am I able to do? What
am I willing to do? Answers to
these questions lead families to
good decisions.

Support Groups for Family Caregivers

First Thursday 10:30 am-12 Noon

June 6th

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

June 7th

Call 262-833-8762 to pre-register

Second Tuesday 1:30-3:00 pm

June 11th

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

June 8th

Atonement Lutheran Church,

2915 Wright Ave

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

Third Wednesday 1:30-3:00 pm

June 19th

Burlington Senior Center, Eppers Room,

209 N. Main St

Third Thursday 6:00-7:30 pm

June 20th

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)