

Caregiver E-Visit

April 2019

Changing Relationships

Jim and Janet are taking care of their mother, Anna, who has Multiple Sclerosis. Anna needs help with walking and transferring in and out of bed, her lift chair, and Jim's car. Jim lives with Anna and works from home in an arrangement with his employer. He misses the friends he socialized with at work before the move. Janet comes when she can, but her job and family responsibilities keep her over-occupied. She doesn't understand how Jim's daily routine is pulling him down, since he "doesn't have to go to work every day and attend kids' sports events." Jim feels like he has lost touch with friends and doesn't like his sister very much right now. He used to love playing with his nephews, but all that seems distant right now. "I wish I had someone to talk to...maybe laugh and have a little fun" he thinks! He decides to attend a Caregiver Support Group.

Meanwhile, Irene lives with her significant other, Robin, who has irreversible dementia. Robin and Irene have been partners for many years – since the days when they gave parties for their many friends, travelled widely, and ran a business together. Robin's cognitive abilities have been waning for at least five years, and their relationship is now centered on seeing that Robin is safe, clean, and nurtured. Most of their

friends are still travelling and partying. Irene searches for the warm feelings she and Robin used to share. She is very lonely and wonders whether there is anyone else on the planet who feels so guilty, sad, and downright angry. She needs to have time away from caregiving to resume some of her favorite activities, if only for a short time. She calls the Aging and Disability Resource Center and asks what can be arranged.



Many challenges and changes occur as you care for a loved one. One of the most impactful is the change in your relationship with the person you are caring for and with other family members.

If you are caring for an aging parent, you find yourself taking care of the person who used to take care of you. It may feel awkward to be the

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one taking charge and making decisions for the person you call Mom or Dad. And conversely, your parent may

be resistant to your help – either embarrassed or frustrated by the lack of independence or unwilling to let their “child” take care of them.

If you are caring for your spouse, the relationship that was once an equal partnership now turns into a caregiver/care receiver relationship. You spent years sharing the day-to-day tasks, but now you are the one left to make decisions and run the household. Also, your spouse may not be able to express feelings of love to you, leaving a huge gap in what was once an intimate relationship.

There will also be changes in relationships with other family members. Each person may have a different idea of what’s best for the person needing care and for your family’s particular situation. This can lead to disagreements and more! Family members may lack awareness about how difficult it is for the primary caregiver, resulting in hurt feelings and unrealistic expectations.

Whatever your situation is, as a caregiver, you will be coping with changing relationships which will undoubtedly be emotionally difficult. Here are some suggestions to help you adjust to these changes:

- **Adjust your perceptions and expectations of the person receiving care.** Try to understand what his current needs and capabilities are, and accept him as he is **now**. Letting go of the way things used to be can be very painful, but it is necessary to adjust to what is real now. If he is treating you differently, remember that it is a result of his disease or condition.
- **Encourage the person receiving care to be as independent as possible, given her current condition.** Abilities and needs may change back and forth frequently. Find out what she can do today, and help her do as much as she can on her own. This will lighten your load and increase her self-confidence and self-worth.
- **Talk about how you are feeling.** Sharing emotions with someone you trust can be very healing. Bottling up your feelings and trying to look stoic will not help. A support group is a safe place to share your emotions with others who are experiencing similar feelings and learn coping techniques as well.

For more information, or if you wish to make comments on this E-Visit, contact Marilyn Joyce 262-833-8764 or email marilyn.joyce@racinecounty.com

- **Consider a meeting with your caregiving family.** Setting aside some time for everyone to communicate their thoughts and ideas creates a feeling of teamwork. Involving family members in a plan of action helps disperse the tasks needed to be done and helps define each person's role. It may be helpful to have a facilitator such as a Caregiver Support Specialist to help keep the discussion on task and to document plans that are made.

The most important thing to remember is that relationship changes are normal, and so are feelings of fear, guilt, and anger. Knowing that these are to be expected, you can make sense of your new relationships and find that peace and satisfaction can also be found in your caregiving role. Feelings change, and you may still receive visits from fear, guilt and anger, but hopefully this little article has brought you some seeds of positive thoughts and hope.

Adapted from an article written by Jane Mahoney of the Greater Wisconsin Agency on Aging Resources

If you would like to attend one of the ADRC's Caregiver Support Groups but have no one to stay with the person you are caring for, we may be able to help. Call 262-833-8764 for details.

Activity Ideas

Racine & Kenosha SPARK! & Partners: Care Couple Sampler Wednesday, April 17

2:00 – 6:00 pm

**RAM's Wustum Museum
2519 Northwestern Avenue
Racine, WI 53404**

Free

Keep your loved one with memory loss actively engaged in your community! Join many local and regional organizations who work in tandem with families who are living with early and mid-stage memory loss. Learn about creative engagement programs and local resources for families in the Racine and Kenosha areas. Bring your loved one to explore activities meant to stimulate the senses. All family members are welcome.

Contact Tricia Blasko at RAM's Wustum Art Museum for more

information or to register.
262.636.9573 tblasko@ramart.org

Powerful Tools for Caregivers

...Because caregiving can be both rewarding and challenging
Wednesdays May 1 – June 5, 2019
5:30pm to 7:30pm

Ives Grove Golf Links Clubhouse
14101 Washington Avenue
Cost: \$10 for textbook and snacks
Call Elizabeth at 262-833-8762 to register or if you have questions.



AGING AND
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OF RACINE COUNTY

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Email: adrc@racinecounty.com

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Support Groups for Family Caregivers

For caregivers who are over 60 or are caring for someone over 60 and caregivers (of any age) for people who have dementia. Contact: Marilyn Joyce, **833-8764** or marilyn.joyce@racinecounty.com

Sometimes we are able to make reminder calls to former attendees about an upcoming Support Group. However, this is not always possible. These groups nearly always happen at the scheduled time and place. If you haven't gotten a call, and you have doubts, please call 262-833-8764 or 262-833-8777. See you there!!

General Caregiver Groups

First Friday
12 Noon-1:00 pm

Caregiver Connection

Telephone Group
Call 833-8762 for call-in
Information

Apr 2 May 3 June 7

Second Saturday
10:30 am-12:00 Noon

Living Faith Lutheran Church
2915 Wright Ave, Racine

Apr 13 May 11 June 8

First Tuesday
1:30-3:00 pm

Yorkville United Methodist
Church
17645 Old Yorkville Rd
(Just off of Highway 20, 3 miles
West of I-94)

Apr 2 May 7 June 4

Third Wednesday
1:30-3:00 pm

Cross Lutheran Church
126 Chapel Ter, Burlington

Apr 17 May 15 June 19

Alzheimer's Association Support Groups:

*For families dealing with any
type of dementia*

First Thursday
10:30 am-12 Noon

Bethania Lutheran Church
4120 Wright Ave, Racine
(Park and enter in the back of the
building)

Apr 4 May 2 June 6

Second Thursday
6:00-7:30 PM

Bethania Lutheran Church
4120 Wright Ave, Racine
(Park and enter in the back of
building)

Apr 11 May 9 June 13

