

Family Caregiver Newsletter

Newsletter Date December 2014

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.

Family Meetings – A Huddle Time for the Family Caregiving Team

Rosemary is a 90-year-old woman who lives alone. She has diabetes and severe osteoporosis. She's had several falls, and her stature is stooped since a fall several years ago. She also has early memory loss. She is a retired nurse who devoted her career to helping older people stay at home as long as possible. That's exactly what her family wants for her.

Her son Tom and his wife Alice live next door. Daughters Carol and Connie each live two hours away, and her son Pete lives in California. Tom and Alice check on Rosemary frequently and bring her meals. They also take her to medical appointments, and do most of her housekeeping, laundry, and outdoor chores. Tom was told recently that he needs major surgery, and Alice has health problems of her own. They feel

overwhelmed with making plans for themselves, recovery, and worrying about Rosemary's well-being. They are hoping family members can offer some ideas and assistance. They ask for a family meeting.

When a person becomes chronically ill or frail, a family is called upon to become a team, working together for the common goal of safety and quality of life for their loved one.

A good team needs an occasional "huddle!" Many extended families get together for holidays in December, and this can be a good time for a family meeting.



"When families meet for a team meeting, there can be humor, fun, and productive planning – and..well...disagreement or bickering."

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Here are a few suggestions that may help to make your family meeting pleasant and productive:

- Invite everyone concerned, including the person needing care whenever possible. Remember that people can join the group by phone, email, or video-chatting, e.g. Skype.
- Have an agenda, a list of issues for discussion, and invite attendees to add their own concerns.
- Decide on a good location that is neutral ground if there are conflicts between some family members.
- Invite people to let go of any “baggage” from the past during this meeting. Ask them to focus on present needs and future plans for the well-being of the loved one in need and for any stressed out caregivers.
- Invite each person to briefly state a) their concerns and hopes for the family member and caregiver(s) and b) what help they can offer.
- As each issue is discussed, make a list of possible solutions and then choose one that seems to be the best option available at this time.
- Record notes and plans that are made and give each person a copy.
- Discuss how to communicate with each other to evaluate

how well the plan is working, so that you can “tweak” it as needed.

Then be sure to do something fun together to celebrate life and family in spite of hard times.

Tom and Alice ask for a family meeting over the holidays while Carol and Connie are in town. Pete says his mother “seems fine” when he calls her, and he doesn’t think there needs to be a “big meeting thing.” Nevertheless, he agrees to join by Skype. Rosemary also doesn’t see the need for a meeting, but agrees that it will be good to have her children all together, and as long as they are talking, the back door needs fixing.

Tom and Alice’s daughter Jodi attends the meeting, and her daughter Sarah who is at a nearby college, joins the group by phone. During the meeting Rosemary is obviously warmed by the expressions of care and concern from her family. She repeats herself a lot and forgets what people have said. Pete in California begins to see that there IS reason to be concerned about his mother’s safety. He also notices that Tom and Alice appear exhausted. He says he’ll pay for yard work and snow removal, and promises to stay with his mother for a week while Tom is recovering from surgery (and he’ll fix that door, too!).

Carol and Connie decide to take turns spending weekends with their Mom as long as they are needed.

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Jodi will inquire about Rosemary attending Harmony Club, a daylong respite program, and she'll arrange for Meals on Wheels. Sarah will arrange to have a Personal Emergency Response System installed so that Rosemary can summon help if needed. Jodi and Sarah will meet with ADRC staff about making other plans for Rosemary's needs.

The family agrees to email or Skype once a week and make further plans as necessary. They decide that when Pete comes to town, they'll plan an-

other meeting. Then the people at Rosemary's have dessert together and play cards – while Pete sits on his patio warmed by sunshine and family, imagining sleigh bells and snow and his old sled!



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.

Want to arrange a Family Meeting?

Contact the ADRC 262-833-8777.

Caregiver Support Specialists can facilitate a family meeting if needed, or provide consultation and tips.

There are also printed materials available that you can use in planning.

Veteran Services and Benefits

If anyone in the family is a veteran, at least check with the County Veterans Service Officer at 262-638-6667 and find out if you are eligible. There are many surprising programs and supports for caregivers available.

Safe Assured ID event on December 4th - 10 AM – Noon Marion Housing 4105 Spring St. For Seniors from a grant from Racine County TRIAD. Contact the Volunteer Center for information on future events at 262-886-9612.

MedicAlert Caregiver program

What if you became incapacitated while away from your care receiver? Consider getting the bracelet that notes you are a caregiver for someone vulnerable. Call 800-432-5378. You can check online for other providers as well.

*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
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Caregiver Opportunities

Educational Programs Available

If you are part of a group that would be interested in hosting a presentation by a Caregiver Support Specialist from the Aging and Disability Resource Center we have several offerings that could be of interest:

- Keeping Your Mind Sharp
- Medication Management Tips
- Preventing Falls

Contact
Ruth at
262-833-
8762



Support Groups for Family Caregivers

First Thursday 10:30 am-12 Noon December 4th
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 December 5th

Call 262-833-8762 to pre-register

Second Tuesday 1:30-3:00 pm December 9th
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 December 13th
Atonement Lutheran Church
2915 Wright Ave
Park and enter in back of building (on South side)

Third Wednesday 1:30-3:00 pm December 17th
Burlington Senior Center, Eppers Room
209 N Main St

Third Thursday 6:00-7:30 pm December 18th
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)