

Family Caregiver Newsletter

Newsletter Date May 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.

During the night I _____.

When I wake the first thing I think is _____.

Sometimes I wish I could just relax!

From Fiery Volcano to Soft Candlelight!

Zelda: A Zebra's Story

Zelda is a zebra. This morning she was chased by a tiger. She ran and ran and ran. Her heart pounded, her blood vessels tightened, and blood was diverted away from organs in her body in order to give her more strength and stamina. She outran that tiger. Then she yawned and lay down for a long nap. In the evening she refreshed herself with water and food.

Zelda used her built in fight-or-flight response to avoid danger. It worked this time. She doesn't worry about the next tiger in her life nor does she hold anger and resentment toward the last one. She takes care of herself, knowing that she is a capable zebra who can handle challenges. Her stress response worked for her, and then went on standby, as relaxation took over.



Two Eruptions
Photograph by James
Appleton, Your Shot
National Geographic

You: A Caregiver's Story

I am a caregiver to: _____.

I do the following tasks for _____'s
safety and wellbeing:

I worry about _____.

I feel like I should _____.

I'm angry about _____.

I'm falling behind in _____.

Sometimes I wish _____.

I feel guilty about _____.

My "things that never get done" include:
_____.

By the end of the day I feel _____.

Chances are that you, dear caregiver, carry what is known as a Sustained Stress Response. It's a human phenomenon. Like a fiery volcano, it seethes in your body, playing havoc in many places. You may sleep fitfully, worrying about what the

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future holds. Anger and guilt may plague you, even though you know they don't serve you well. Inside, you maintain a heart that works too hard, high blood pressure, a sensitive digestive system, and other ingredients of serious health problems. If only you had time and space to just relax!

The good news is that humans, too, have the mechanism for a relaxation response. We also have busy minds, which can take us back into stress mode in the blink of an eye. The trick is to return often to state of mind that is positive or at least neutral.

Our minds spend a lot of time dwelling on the past, worrying about the future, and questing after impossible perfection. Relaxation requires a conscious letting go. We need to let go of expectations of ourselves and others – expectations like doing it all alone, being right all the time, and taking responsibility for someone else's contentment. We need to let go of worry. (Later, we can transform worry into solution-seeking concern.)

We need to put out that volcano of stress and replace it with soft, restful candlelight.

Following are some cues to get you started with that transformation. They will afford you some relaxation that doesn't take much time or space. Some of them are pretty serious, others purposely playful. They aren't magic and can easily be cancelled by a busy mind. That's why I hope you will find a few that you can call on often, and make them habits. I'm sure you'll design some of your own, too.

Breathe Consciously

Breathe in and feel your upper belly inflate.

Breathe out slowly, through pursed lips,

as though you were about to whistle. Take three of these "belly breaths," long, full, and slow. Feel your body relax. Take a comfortable pause between breaths. Use the pause to "just be here now," letting go of judgment, comparisons, and expectations. In this moment, "let it be."

Blow some bubbles. Blow out tension, anger, worry... whatever doesn't serve you. Let them vanish with the bubbles. Inhale deeply and let in peace and contentment.

Take Good Care of Yourself

Practice healthful posture: Sit or stand as tall as you can; relax shoulders down and back; engage your strong core ("abs"); lift the crown of your head a little; breathe deep and slow and feel strong as a mountain.

Eat a healthy snack, drink some water, rest a bit, exercise a moment.

Hug yourself and say, I'm doing my best."

Order yourself flowers (don't forget a note with compliments!).

Move freely for a moment: swing your arms or march in place.

Savor Your Senses

Find something pleasant in what you see, hear, feel, smell, or taste in this moment (or remember such a pleasure).

Welcome the joy it brings.

Hold something in the palm of your hand (a comfort you learned before you were born).

Listen to music that serves you well.

Eat something (a bite of chocolate?) slowly and mindfully.

Look at something beautiful and breathe in the sight, as if for the first (or last) time.

Hug someone (maybe yourself!).

Express Yourself

Write – in a journal, on a napkin, in a card or email, on social media, on a caregivers' website, in a note to yourself. Talk with a friend, Caregiver Support

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Specialist, support group, or to a pet!
Hum... sing... whistle... dance!

Doodle, decorate, dress in a color that lifts your spirits.

Laugh out loud – whenever you can. (Carry a LOL card in your pocket, along with a cartoon.)

Have a good cry when you need to.

Let Nature Nurture You

Soak in its wonders at every chance, even by gazing out a window for a few breathes or watching the resilience of a houseplant.

Some of nature's gifts: fresh air, sunlight, water, colors, creatures, resilience, endless variety, and interesting weather!

Notice nature's wider lessons: Life has cycles, is persistent, and, despite misfortunes, is good.

Remind yourself that you are part of

something bigger, wherein lies the Higher Power of your understanding.

Practice Gratitude

Think of at least three things you are thankful for at this moment. Make a list of them or hold them in your heart, as you breathe slowly and deeply.

Think of some more! On “terrible, horrible, no-good, very bad” days, try listing even more than you do on good days! Ironically, this practice will never fail you!

Say “Thank You!” to someone for something, no matter how small. Notice how you feel. This may bring a smile or perhaps a hug!

May you be well and at peace as you nurture your own wellbeing.



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

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.

Our Harmony Club

Call 262-880-5301 or 262-716-1998 for info or to register. You can also email: ourharmonyclub@hotmail.com
Clubs are held Monday -Thursday at 8 different locations around the County. The club provides 6 hours during which caregivers can drop off their senior family members, and it is a social outing for the senior guests with organized and informal activities plus lunch.

SkillBank

Office hours are M-F 8 am to 1 pm. Phone 637-7515. The Skillbank is a unique program where seniors help out other seniors with all sorts of tasks.

Alzheimer's Family and Caregiver Support Program. There is currently

some space in this program. Call for info 262-833-8777.

Upcoming classes:

Balancing Caregiving and the Workplace - Tuesday June 9th, 9:00-10:30 am, 14200 Washington Ave, Sturtevant. Call to register 262-833-8777

Powerful Tools for Caregivers
Six-week class starts Aug. 3rd 1-3 PM at Atonement Lutheran Church (Respite care available for Harmony Club participants)

Stepping On –Seven-week class starting Sept. 3rd on Thursday afternoons at Sealed Air YMCA.





14200 Washington Ave
Sturtevant, WI 53177

Caregiver Opportunities

Caregiver Consultations:

Tasha Orr-Holmes of the Alzheimer’s Association will provide care consultations families dealing with any type of dementia.

Tasha has openings for Thursday June 18 from 10:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. We will schedule 2 one hour appointments. To schedule an appointment with Tasha contact Felicia at 262-833-8761.

Caregiving Relationships

Open to caregivers over 60 years of age, those caring for someone over 60, and anyone caring for a person with dementia.

May 16, 23, and 30, 2015.

10:30 AM – 12:30 PM

Atonement Lutheran Church, 2915 Wright Avenue \$10 for the series will cover supplies and refreshments (Scholarships available.) Call Marilyn at 262-833-8764 to register. Call Today!



Support Groups for Family Caregivers

**First Thursday 10:30 am-12 Noon
Alzheimer’s Association Group**

May 7th

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

**First Friday 12 Noon-1pm “Caregiver Connection”
Telephone Group**

May 1st

Call 262-833-8762 to pre-register

New Day-Third Tuesday 1:30-3:00 pm

May 19th

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
Atonement Lutheran Church**

May 9th

2915 Wright Ave
Park and enter in back of building (on South side)

Third Wednesday 1:30-3:00 pm

May 20th

Burlington Senior Center, Eppers Room
209 N Main St

**Third Thursday 6:00-7:30 pm
Alzheimer’s Association Group**

May 21st

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)