

Family Caregiver Newsletter

Newsletter Date November 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.

Believe in Yourself

November is National Family Caregivers' Month. Over 80% of long-term care in our country is given by family caregivers like you. So please know how much we at the ADRC honor you and would like to remind you to believe in and honor yourself, now and always.

You can start by treating yourself as you treat a good friend. Be non-judgmental and look for the good that lies within you. Be gentle and patient with yourself. Practice kindness, accepting yourself as you are. Validate your feelings as they come and go, and give yourself compassion.

Too often I hear family caregivers berating themselves and expecting much more than they ever would expect of anyone else. Here are some of the self-deprecating remarks I've heard lately:

"Even though my situation is intolerable, I can't change it

because I'm afraid I'll make the wrong decision." A considered decision is neither right nor wrong. It's what you feel is best for now, knowing your family member and your situation. Weigh the pros and cons and do what seems best of the viable options you have. Trust your judgment now, and you may make adjustments needed.

"I can't have anybody help with housework. My house is so messy, I'm ashamed to have anyone come in."

The state of your house may indicate the need for help, but it is not a measure of your worth.

"Sometimes I just yell 'I told you that a thousand times!, Then I feel guilty'" Out of hundreds of caregivers, I haven't



Take time to celebrate your accomplishments. Be your own best friend!

Inside this issue:

Believe In Yourself	1
Community Resources	3
Support Groups for Family Caregivers	4
Caregiver Opportunities	4



"What lies behind us and what lies before us are small matters compared to what lies within us."

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

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continued from front page

known one who has never lost patience. Apologize if necessary, and forgive yourself. Ask for help, and take some time away.

"I should be with my care partner all the time." And ***"I should spend more time with my grandchildren."*** Ah, yes, sometimes we put ourselves in a double bind. There is no perfect formula. Trust yourself to find a balance that works for you and feeds the important relationships in your life.

"Sometimes I wish it would be over. How can I be wishing for the death of someone I love?" Life and death happen on their own terms. Thoughts come and go. Looking past the difficulties of the caregiving journey does not hasten its end.

"I felt guilty for going to the party." Spending happy time away is not something you did to hurt your family member. In fact, it makes you a healthier person and a better caregiver. Spin that guilt feeling into what it is...a regret that your family member can't share in the celebration.

"I shouldn't feel this way." A wide range of feelings come and go in the caregiving journey. They are valid reactions to a thought or situation. Acknowledge your feelings, knowing, they can change like clouds on a windy day. Doing something that enhances your health and well-being, like taking a walk, will help to transform difficult emotions.

Here are some ways to care for yourself as you care for someone else:

Express Yourself – Talk to someone, write, email, join a support group (in-person, online, or by phone), have a good cry sometimes.

Ask for Help—Caregiving is not only an opportunity to be of service - it is also a chance to receive help. When people do things for each other, Giver and Receiver are both blessed. Being a gracious receiver of help is a gift to the helper.

Maintain a Spiritual Practice—pray, meditate, commune with nature, whatever holds meaning for you.

Listen to Music (or make some of your own) - Music bypasses the mind and goes directly to the heart, soul, and body. It can calm a raging mind or recharge a situation with different or renewed energy.

Lighten Up! – It's OK to play and laugh, smile, tell jokes, blow bubbles, watch a comedy, and celebrate life.

Practice Gratitude In this month of Thanksgiving, it behooves us to notice all that we have instead of only counting our losses. Keeping a Gratitude Journal – a list of a few things every day to appreciate – can be a powerful practice.

In Reduce Your Caregiver Stress, author Julie Interrante writes, "...there is a natural cycle of life we can honor and be grateful for... [caregiving] offers you the chance to notice the power of love in small moments." She continues: "Bless

... continued from page 2

those you have cared for and been touched by. Bless yourself for having the courage to be a caregiver. Bless it all. It matters. Life is good, and so are you!”

As life continues to send me lessons, I am reminded of Louisa May Alcott’s declaration: “I am no

longer afraid of the storm, for I am learning to sail my ship.” Please believe that if you care for your own health and well-being you will be able to pilot your ship through the caregiving voyage, come what may.

Happy Family Caregiver Month!



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.

With the news focused on the recent implementation of the Affordable Health-Care Act—here is a reminder that from **October 7th to December 7th it is time for Medicare open enrollment.**

It is important to reanalyze your coverage as plans change every year in the details of premiums, co-payments, and the formularies – which are the drugs the plan covers. With over 50 plans in Wisconsin to choose from it can be a challenge, but most of the time you can save on average between \$200 and \$800 a year by:

- Considering the deductibles and co-payments in the total annual cost of a plan before making your final selection.
- Knowing if the plan’s formulary will cover all or most of the drugs you take.
- Knowing if the plan covers generics if you get to the coverage gap, also known as the “donut hole.”

There is **help** available. You can use the online drug plan comparison tools at www.medicare.gov, or you can find people who will help you use this tool and answer questions. Be cautious if you attend public programs about Part D Plans and check out who is sponsoring the information before attending.

Prescription Drug Helpline

1-855-677-2783

<http://www.longtermcare.wi.gov>

Helpline counselors are available to provide assistance to Wisconsin Medicare beneficiaries who are over the age of 60, regarding prescription drug benefits.

Disability Drug Benefit Helpline

1-800-926-4862

<http://www.disabilityrightswi.org/programs/medicare-part-d/>

Disability Rights Wisconsin (DRW) operates a statewide helpline to help people age 59 or younger with disabilities and their families or guardians with the complicated Medicare prescription drug benefit.

Your Pharmacy Many local pharmacies will assist their consumers with plan selection. Check with the one you use.

Benefit Specialists Your county benefit specialist is also available to answer questions and assist with your Medicare D Plan selection, and other benefit issues. Call 262-833-8777 or 1-866-219-1043 Toll Free.

For help with **Health plan changes** contact the ADRC for more resources.

*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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Caregiver Opportunities

Mary Finley, Outreach Specialist from the **Alzheimer's Association**, will be available for family consultations on Wednesday, November 20th between 2 and 4 p.m. at the ADRC office located at 14200 Washington Ave (just west of I-94). This invitation is extended to those dealing with **any type of dementia**. For an appointment call Felicia Elias, 833-8761.

"Believe in Yourself," a gala event for Family Caregivers, will take place on Wednesday, November 13th, at Veteran's Terrace in Burlington. This is a FREE event with lunch for all and respite care for your care receiver. **Call Felicia at 833-8761 to register Today!**

Support Groups for Family Caregivers

First Thursday 10:30 am-12 Noon

November 7th

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

November 1st

Call 262-833-8762 to pre-register

Second Tuesday 1:30-3:00 pm

November 12th

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

November 9th

Atonement Lutheran Church,

2915 Wright Ave

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

Third Wednesday 1:30-3:00 pm

November 20th

Burlington Senior Center, Eppers Room,
209 N. Main St

Third Thursday 6:00-7:30 pm

November 21st

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)