

Family Caregiver Newsletter

Newsletter Date October 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.

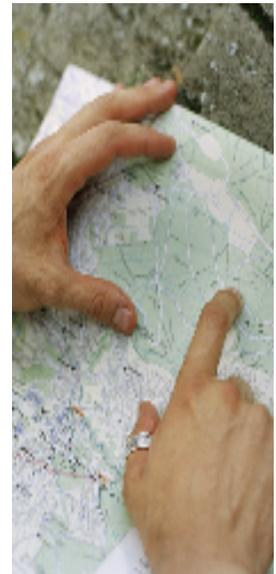
Moving Safely Through Phases of Family Caregiving

Although each Family Caregiver's journey is unique, there are some common patterns that deserve attention. One of those is the tendency for caregivers (usually one person in a family) to jump in, often after a crisis, and try to "do it all." A crisis changes our body chemistry and, just like the little lady who can lift a car off of a loved one, that caregiver takes on, an enormous amount of work and responsibility. As time goes on the caregiving role grows insidiously, and down the road it's not unusual for that kind and well-meaning person to hit the proverbial wall. It may be a wall of illness, disturbed relationships, resentment, financial crisis, or other life disturbance. Some caregivers keep their foot on the accelerator and try to drive right over the wall. That doesn't end well! Sooner or later, a wall must be recognized and

avoided by changing course. Here's a story of one caregiver. It's divided into several phases of caregiving, and the titles are borrowed from Gail Sheahy's book Passages in Caregiving.

Mobilization and the New Normal

Christine is a 38-year-old mother of three children who works fulltime as a teacher. Over the last several years, she has been helping her 88-year-old grandfather



Harry, who lives alone. He has rheumatoid arthritis and heart disease. At first Christine was only providing transportation for him. Over time she has also begun doing his cooking, housecleaning, bills, and yard work.

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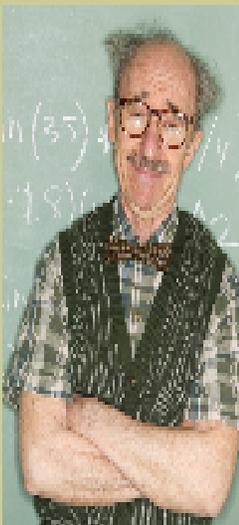
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Christine has always been close to her grandfather, and she is glad she can help him in his elder years. She has made many adjustments in other areas of her life in order to give him the best care she can. She often goes to his house directly after work, while her husband participates in her children's activities. Lately, Christine has noticed that her grandpa appears unkempt, and she suspects that he is having more difficulty taking care of his own physical needs. She wonders how she will add his daily hygiene to her already busy schedule.

Boomerang - "I Can't Do This Anymore"

One day Christine arrives at Harry's house after work, and finds him still in bed, soaked with urine, very warm to the touch, and calling out for her. She calls an ambulance, and after five hours in the Emergency Room, Harry is admitted to the hospital with pneumonia and a urinary tract infection. Christine spends as much time as she can visiting her grandpa, but she feels uncomfortable deep inside. One night her youngest child says, "Mommy, I miss you. I hardly know you anymore." Christine is crushed. She feels wedged between her grandfather's and her children's needs. She realizes that Harry's needs will only continue to grow for the rest of his life and that her children are changing and growing without her. That night she can only cry and cry. By morning she knows

that she can't go back to the same routine. Something must change!

Coming Back or The Transitioning Caregiver

Chris confides in her cousin from a neighboring town, and together they talk with the hospital discharge planner and visit the Aging and Disability Resource Center. They are able to piece together a care plan that includes a Personal Emergency Response System; Meals on Wheels; and assistance from Skill Bank with housecleaning and yard work. When Harry recovers, he attends an Adult Day program which provides meals and bathing. Chris attends a support group for caregivers, which she finds very helpful. With help from a Caregiver Support Specialist and a group of Christine's coworkers who form a Care Team that take turns bringing Harry evening meals and being friendly visitors for him, Chris gains some peace of mind and spends more time with her family.

The Long Good-bye

After some time Harry experiences more illness and several falls. Chris realizes that he can no longer be alone at all. She finds a residential care center and helps him move there. She visits him often, and she realizes that she feels more like his granddaughter again and less like his caregiver. They play the card games they used to play when she was a child. She notices his mental and physical faculties failing day by day,

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and she sadly realizes that he will die soon. She and her children visit often, take him his favorite foods, and let him know in many other ways that he is an important and loved part of their family.

When the end of Harry's life comes and Chris looks back on her caregiving years, she is glad that she had this experience. Most caregivers report feeling that way and are grateful for the gifts and lessons and love they have experienced. Sadly, others don't survive the journey with

their physical and emotional health intact.

Knowing how to negotiate the turns along the road without hitting the wall...or knowing when you've hit a wall, and changing your course. These are the keys to a healthy journey. That's why family caregiver education and support are important and downright lifesaving!

Please navigate safely down your road and ask for directions when you need to! Bon voyage!



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.

SPARK- is a program series that provides cultural programming for people with memory loss and their caregivers; includes hands-on art activities, art conversations, poetry, dance and movement. Call Tricia Blasko at 262-636-9573.

Meal on Wheels - provides (midday) meals to those who are homebound and at least 60 years old. Call 262-636-0727.

Personal Emergency Response Systems - Several are available in Racine County. Look on pages 72 & 73 in the Community Resource Directory. http://www.adrc.racineco.com/site/453/service_directory.aspx or call 638-6678 and request a copy by mail.

In-Home Help - See Community Resource Directory, pages 19-24. Call 638-6678 to request printed information

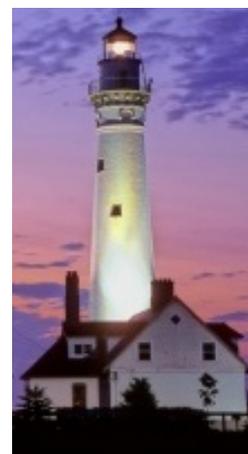
on hiring in-home caregivers.

Harmony Club (898-8900) – A social model group respite program offering individual companionship, supervision, and activities. (Call 898-8900).

Adult Day Care Programs – See Community Resource Directory page 28. Get services in a safe environment so your person can remain home longer.

Care Teams – Staff of the Senior Services Dept. of the ADRC are willing to assist caregiving families and those who care about them in forming teams organized to meet particular needs related to caregiving. For more information call: 262-638-6678 or email marilyn.joyce@goracine.org.

*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
Sturtevant, WI 53177

Caregiver Opportunities

The Aging & Disability Resource Center of Racine County presents our

6th Annual Caregiver Conference Celebrating Families Caring for a Loved One



Caregivers will enjoy:

- Continental Breakfast
- Educational Presentations
- Chair Massage
- Blood Pressure Screenings
- Local Resource Information
- Free Lunch

Grace Church, 3626 Hwy 31, Racine, WI. Register by Wednesday, October 29, 2014 by calling Felicia Elias at 262-833-8761. If respite care is needed registration must be completed by Thursday, October 23, 2014

Support Groups for Family Caregivers

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

October 2nd

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

October 3rd

Call 262-833-8762 to pre-register

Second Tuesday 1:30-3:00 pm

October 14th

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

October 11th

Atonement Lutheran Church
2915 Wright Ave

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

Third Wednesday 1:30-3:00 pm

October 15th

Burlington Senior Center, Eppers Room
209 N Main St

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

October 16th

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)