

Caregiver E-Visit

July 2018

Wandering in the Wilderness

A caregiver's journey includes what seem like comfortable plateaus interlaced with unexpected crises. Some issues definitely indicate that a change in caregiving arrangements is needed. Perhaps the care receiver's dementia is progressing, risk of wandering is more apparent, falls are unavoidable, or perhaps the caregiver is sleep-deprived, injured, or in poor health.

This can be a tough time for everyone involved – a time of difficult decision-making, overwhelming changes, frustrating paperwork, dealing with care providers and government agencies (just to name a few). This often marks the end of a phase of life, and it brings significant losses – people who have lived together for many years suddenly sleep and eat in loneliness; feelings of abandonment and anger are expressed to the already overwhelmed caregiver. The nature of a family's life at this time has an element of sadness and reminds us of our loved one's mortality, as well as their own.

Experts remind us that change is an external event that can happen quickly and triggers an internal process that takes much longer and is called transition. This is when our thoughts

and emotions, our habits and schedules, are catching up with the change that has happened. A transition feels like “wandering in the wilderness.” It's difficult, but we can survive to find new beginnings.

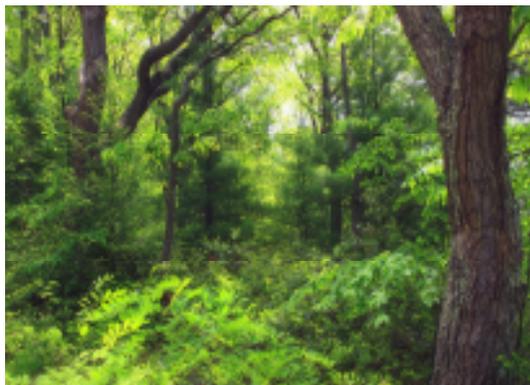


Let's look in on some current caregivers in this process.

Change: Jane and Cathy suddenly realized immediate changes were necessary in their caregiving routines. Their husbands could no longer be left alone safely. So suddenly they were dealing with added responsibilities of making new arrangements while at the same time planning for someone to stay with their husbands; researching possibilities for in-home care, adult day services; Medicaid community programs, Jane and Mary realized that they needed help, and called Caregiver Support Specialists. They



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



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were advised to let family members know what's changing and how they can help. The truth is that such changes may be as much of a family crisis as a funeral (or even more so).

For a caregiver, change may seem like a thunderstorm. Your familiar shelter disappears. Lightning strikes. It seems to aim for the very spot where you just moved time and time again. You look for a safe haven, but one door after another slams shut. Thunder seems to roar, "This won't work, that won't work, change, change, change." Your heart and your brain race and it occurs to you that "THIS IS A CRISIS, AND I NEED HELP!"

Wilderness: Dave's changes were also traumatic, and followed shortly after he had sold the family home and moved to the other side of town, hoping apartment living, with assistance available, would be the next solution in caring for his wife Lily while he was still working. Then Lily left the apartment and got lost, so Dave quit his job, applied for Medicaid, and found a care facility an hour's drive away. Dave's losses included his home, neighborhood, shopping places, and social connections, gone-by happier times, financial

security, a work role, privacy, medical and dental providers in the new location, new place of worship, and more, including living with his wife. Dave said he was taken aback by all the various emotions these changes had brought.

Your wilderness may seem like a dark, directionless forest crowded with hazards and obstacles with creatures making eerie noises as if to say, "You don't belong here,;" and mosquitos biting like pangs of guilt. You bounce from one rock and tree trunk to another, finding no sense anywhere, stumbling and bumping along. One day you notice a thin ray of sunshine. Your eyes trace the yellow outline to ground, and you notice a tiny green twiglet on the forest floor, growing up between two heavy rocks. You are inspired, and trudge carefully in the direction of the sunlight. With great persistence, you finally glimpse the end of the forest. You may wander some more, (that's human nature) but eventually you'll step courageously out of your dark forest. The twiglet that propels you toward the sunshine may be grandchild, a visit from an old friend, the smell of baking cookies, the feel of perfect weather, remembering a hobby, hearing a piece of music, - most likely something small and nearby. Then you remember that you are doing your best and can survive and thrive again.

New Beginnings

Jim cared for his beloved wife Mary for many years. The time came, though, when that was no longer

Into the Wilderness *continued*

workable, and Mary, resided at a care facility for the rest of her life. Jim spent some time talking to a caregiver support specialist during his wilderness period. He was reminded that he'd made the best choice available to him and that he needed to take good care of himself by enjoying life. Gradually he established a sustainable schedule for visiting and sharing moments of joy with Mary and with family and friends they made at the facility. Jim began spending more time with his grandchildren, He enjoyed fishing and photography again. He made sure Mary received the care she needed, and he was able to spend her last days being with her, holding her hand and expressing his love.

New beginnings may bring renewed relationship with family and friends, a chance to take better care of your health and get to know yourself again, hobbies, new activities, even travel. If

the care partner resides in a care facility, at visits you may find yourself feeling more like that person's loved one that just an overwhelmed caregiver (even though you are still a caregiver and there will be more challenges and changes.)

New beginnings can seem like a rainbow after a storm. You've wandered, counted your losses, and cried. Now you can see colors, count your blessings, and feel hope again. Congratulations!!

Starting from the comfortable, safe environment we leave at birth, beginnings come with endings, transitions, and new beginnings attached. That's life! It's an odyssey worth traveling. May yours be filled with courage, companions and many other blessings.



Summer Classes

If you are interested please contact Elizabeth for more information: 262-833-8762

Stepping On Classes to be held:

August—Racine area location

September—Burlington area location

Powerful Tools Coming this Fall in the Burlington area. Look for more details or call to get on the information list.

Effective Communication Strategies

A Class on Effective Communication Strategies presented by the Alzheimer's Association of SEW, will be held at Racine Gateway Technical College, July 10th, 10 a.m.-Noon.

Communication is more than just talking and listening—it's about sending and receiving messages through attitude, tone of voice, facial expressions and body language. As people with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias progress in their journey and the ability to use words is lost, families need new ways to

connect. Join us in this 2-hour presentation to learn to explore how communication takes place when someone has Alzheimer's, learn to decode the verbal and behavioral messages delivered by someone with dementia, and identify strategies to help you connect and communication at each stage of the disease. For registration please call the Alzheimer's Association at: 1-800-272-3900

AGING AND
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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

July 6 Aug 3 Sept 7

Second Saturday
10:30 am- 12:00 Noon
Atonement Lutheran Church
2915 Wright Ave, Racine
July 14 Aug 11 Sept 8

Third 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)
July 17 Aug 21 Sept 18

Third Wednesday
1:30-3:00 pm
Cross Lutheran Church
126 Chapel Ter, Burlington
July 18 Aug 15 Sept 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)
July 5 Aug 2 Sept 6

Second Thursday
6:00 – 7:30 PM
Bethania Lutheran Church
4120 Wright Ave, Racine
(Park and enter in the back of
building)
July 12 Aug 9 Sept 13

