



FAMILY CAREGIVER NEWSLETTER NOVEMBER 2012

National Family Caregivers' Month!!

Support Group and Event Information Inside

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's offered in Racine County several times a year.

Here's to **Your** Health!

Richard is a 75-year-old caregiver to his wife Ann. Ann has had Parkinson Disease for many years. She needs assistance with all of her daily care, including feeding herself, going to the bathroom, and getting from place to place. Richard is a loving husband and caregiver. He says, "Ann took care of me and the children for many years, and now it's my turn." His devotion is admirable. However, Richard is neglecting his own health. Often he is so focused on feeding Ann that he forgets to eat himself. Because Ann needs help and reassurance at night, Richard never gets a good night's sleep. His only exercise is doing housekeeping and lifting Ann whenever she needs to move. He has lost contact with the friends he used to golf and go fishing with. He hasn't seen a doctor in several years.

Richard's children are concerned about his health. They notice that he's losing weight and looking haggard. His daughter says, "Dad, you look terrible! If you go on like this, you'll collapse one of these days, and then who will take care of Mom? Besides, all you are anymore is a caregiver. You're grandchildren hardly know you!" Richard thinks long and hard about what she said, and he decides to make some changes.

Happy National Family Caregivers' Month!!!! The objective of this article is to honor your right and responsibility to care for YOURSELF with the same love and concern that you care for someone else. Kudos to you on your journey.

Health is undoubtedly the most useful and precious asset any of us possess. That goes double for caregivers, because you have at least two people depending on your being well. In order to play this vital role, you need to be well nourished, well rested, strong, comfortable, and happy! You must make your own health and well-being a priority. It's like they say when you're about to take off on a plane: "In an emergency, apply your own oxygen mask before helping another person."

Here are some habits that are essential to keeping your own "oxygen mask" in place:

- ❖ **Eat well:** Eat naturally, regularly, moderately, and colorfully (colorful foods like sweet potatoes, winter squash, or berries). Get plenty of fruits, vegetables, and protein. Try not to eat much "junk food." Eat real meals. Take time to enjoy eating healthful food.

- ❖ **Drink plenty of water:** Drink 6-8 cups of water in addition to other healthy beverages, Try not to drink carbonated or sweetened beverages.
- ❖ **Breathe fully.** Let your upper belly soften and fill with air, expand your ribs in all four directions, and let your upper chest expand. Take deep, slow “belly breaths” whenever you think of it. This healthy habit helps to manage stress. It takes no time or space!
- ❖ **Exercise:** Movement strengthens bones and muscles, reduces the effects of stress, lowers risk of heart disease, helps regulate blood pressure, gets rid of excess weight and makes you happier! Ninety minutes of moderate exercise a week is recommended. As a caregiver, you may need to do a few minutes at a time. Remember **something is better than nothing!** You may want to go for a walk or use an exercise video. A fun way to exercise is to put on some peppy music, start tapping your feet, and then just move your whole body. Your care receiver may join in the fun, too!
- ❖ **Sleep well:** Try to sleep eight hours each day. If caregiving duties keep you awake at night, you need to reach out for help to avoid sleep deprivation. A Day Respite Program may give you time for a nap. You may need to have help in your home at night. If you are having trouble falling asleep or wake early feeling anxious, try some relaxation techniques e.g. conscious deep, slow breathing, music, or try progressive muscle relaxation. NOTE: a change in sleep patterns can be a sign of clinical depression and should be reported to you doctor if it lasts more than two weeks.
- ❖ **See a health care provider regularly:** Have regular check-ups and follow through on medical advice. Be sure your health care provider knows about your caregiving situation. It is a source of chronic stress, which has many health implications. Follow advice regarding preventive treatments, e.g. inoculations, prescriptions, and supplements. Also be sure to follow through on routine monitoring like mammograms, and bone density tests.

Here are a few habits that can enhance health practices:

- ❖ **Express yourself:** Talk with a friend, another caregiver, a supportive family member. (People in care facilities in later stages of dementia have been shown to need at least 20 minutes a day of meaningful human interaction. It’s a basic need for all of us.) Don’t lose touch with friends and family. Find people who understand, and interact with them regularly. If you can’t always have a verbal conversation, email someone or join a chat room for caregivers. You can also express yourself by keeping a journal.
- ❖ **Practice Gratitude:** Many people find that keeping a Gratitude Journal helps them maintain a positive attitude. Positive thinking helps motivate you to practice good health habits, and it also enhances those habits to keep body in optimal condition.
- ❖ **Laugh:** whenever you can. It’s one of the healthiest things you can do. Some caregivers watch funny old movies with their care receiver. Nothing clears the air and strengthens a bond between people like a good belly laugh!!

Think you are too busy for healthy habits? Consider - Do you have time to be sick? Can you afford not to invest in your future well-being? After caregiving is over, other people in your life will still need a healthy, happy you! Please honor yourself and those around you by vowing to take care of YOU!

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 (638-833-8777) or www.adrc.racineco.com

As a family caregiver YOU NEED RESPITE (time away from caregiving to rest, to be with other people, and, yes, to HAVE FUN!) Respite is a necessity, not a luxury. Here are some sources of respite care in our community.

A Share-the-Care Team – is a way to organize help offered by friends and family members into an efficient system of support. It is a system that has worked well for caregiving families in the USA and beyond. Call Ruth Stauersbol at **262-833-8762** for more information and assistance.

Harmony Club is a social model day respite program. A Coordinator is in charge, and trained volunteers are present to spend the day with the guests. The environment at Harmony Club is upbeat and personable. Guests may be reluctant at first, but usually learn to enjoy and look forward to their days there. The Coordinator visits with each family before the care receiver becomes a guest, to be sure all his or her needs can be met. Medications are not administered during the day, and only minimal assistance is given in meeting physical needs. Harmony Club is inexpensive, and many caregivers have found this program to be a lifesaver in affording them time to rest and tend to their own needs. More information is on p. 68 and 78 of the Community Resource Directory (CRD). Phone: **262-898-8900**.

Adult Day Care services provide medical model respite. They have paid staff that can provide all types of hands-on care and can dispense medication. They may offer bathing services. They are usually open about ten hours a day. Programs in Racine County are listed in the CRD on page 28.

In-Home Help – There are quite a number of agencies in Racine County that provide respite care and chore services e.g. housekeeping, laundry, and meal preparation. In Home Assistance Agencies are listed in the CRD on pp. 21-23.

If you foresee difficulty in paying for respite services, call the ADRC (262-833-8777).

Support Groups for Family Caregivers

First Thursday 10:30AM-12Noon

Alzheimer's Association Group — NOV. 1

For Families Dealing with Alzheimer's and other Dementias

Lincoln Lutheran Office Building, 2000 Domanik Drive, 4th Floor

First Friday 12N-1PM **NOV. 2**

“Caregiver Connection” Telephone Group

Call 262-833-8762 to pre-register.

Second Tuesday 1:30-3:00 pm **NOV. 13**

Yorkville United Methodist Church

17645 Old Yorkville Rd. (3 Miles West of I-94, Just N. of Highway 20)

Second Saturday 10:30AM-12N **NOV. 10**

Mount Pleasant Lutheran Church, 1700 S. Green Bay Road

Third Wednesday 1:30-3:00 PM **NOV. 21**

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

Third Thursday 6:00-7:30 PM

Alzheimer’s Association Group **NOV. 15**

For Families Dealing with Alzheimer’s and other Dementias

Mount Pleasant Lutheran Church, 1700 S. Green Bay Road

Other Events for Caregiving Families

“The Heart of the Matter”

A free gala event in celebration of National Family Caregivers’ Month
Friday, November 2nd

For information and to register call Felicia Elias **262-833-8761**.

Paulette Kisse, Outreach Specialist, will be available for two **family consultations** on
Wednesday, **November 28th** between 2 and 4 pm.
at the Racine County Ives Grove County Offices, 14200 Washington Avenue. Sturtevant
For an appointment call **Felicia Elias, 262-833-8761**

November can be a good month for looking inward. It is a wonderful time to cultivate habits of appreciation. A Gratitude Journal can be a powerful reminder of all that we have that is precious and worth investing in.

Have a wonderful Thanks-giving!

**Marilyn Joyce, Caregiver Support Specialist,
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