



In Support of Caregivers

A Publication of the Caregivers' Resource Center and Alzheimer's Support Unit at the Tompkins County Office for the Aging

Spring 2012

Vol. 24, Number

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Self-care is Not Selfish

Most faith traditions invite their adherents to self-sacrifice. To tend to the needs of others is a high calling. Such acts of charity begin at home with unconditional love shown there and hopefully radiate out into the community and world. However, there is a difference between self-sacrifice and self-neglect. In the February 2012 issue of *Aging in Action*, Jane Hamilton, reminds us that, over time, caregiving without sufficient self-care “can take a toll on body and mind, heart and soul, personal finances, family relationships, and work life.” This can lead to mood disturbances such as depression, anxiety disorders, and insomnia.

In an article in this issue, Ms. Hamilton invites you to examine how you cope with stress. We cannot be caregiving machines, she writes. We can't be lubricated with alcohol and prescription drugs. We're human and can't go it alone. We need social support, conversation, as well as others to lend a hand. We need to clear our minds of worry with time apart for meditation, prayer, journaling, craft work, or communing with nature. We need exercise, rest, and good nutrition. We need to conserve our energy by defining what is important and what is not.



Our spring “Powerful Tools for Caregivers” classes are starting soon (see p. 4). They can help improve self-care if you feel you are at risk for self-neglect. Or call the Caregivers' Resource Center to discuss any other caregiving concerns you may have.

(If you plan to attend the “Powerful Tools for Caregivers Classes this Spring, try to register ASAP- by March 23 if possible.)

Spring Support Groups

The Caregivers' Resource Center facilitates the following groups. Call 274-5492 for details.



Weekly Caregiver Support Group Meeting

- Open to those caring for parents, spouses or other elderly relatives or friends.
- **Every Thursday at 6:30 PM.**
- Meets in the lounge at Lifelong, 119 W. Court St., Ithaca

Alzheimer's Support Group

- Open to those caring for loved ones with Alzheimer's or other cognitive impairments
- Meets the 4th Tuesday of each month (March 27, April 24, May 22)
- 1:00 - 2:30 PM in the Office for the Aging Conference Room (320 N. Tioga St., Ithaca) in the main courthouse.

Parkinson's Support Group

- Open to Parkinsonians and their Caregivers.
- Meets Quarterly: (Next Meeting: April 18)
- 2:00 PM - 3:30 PM at Cooperative Extension, 615 Willow Ave., Ithaca

Other Alzheimer's Groups

In addition to the daytime group (above), these meetings may be convenient for some caring for loved ones with Alzheimer's or a related disorder:

1st Wednesday of each month at 6:00 PM
at Lifelong, 119 W. Court St.. Ithaca. For info., call the Alzheimer's Association at 330-1647.

3rd Wednesday of the month, 12:30-1:30 PM

at Walden Place, Cortlandville. Call 756-8101.

Local Caregiver Services

Caregivers' Resource Center & Project CARE Services

Tompkins County Office for the Aging

David Stoyell, Katrina Schickel, Robert Levine (274-5482)

Discover the Resource Center

The Caregivers' Resource Center &

Alzheimer's Support Unit offers family caregivers information and consultation services, support groups, workshops, this newsletter, and a lending library of books and videos on caregiving topics. Stop by or call for an appointment.

Volunteers from *Project CARE* give caregivers a needed break and help out in other ways as needed. We may also be able to arrange for paid home care services or short-term respite for stressed caregivers having difficulty paying for those services. Call Katrina to discuss your needs.

In-Home Counseling & Respite Service

Family and Children's Service

Jessica Gosa (273-7495)



A caregiver counselor will meet with family caregivers at their home, her office, or elsewhere and help them work through complex caregiving issues or for emotional support. This program also offers grant-funded respite aide service to give caregivers a needed break.

Adult Day Program

Longview Adult Day Community

Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays,
9 AM- 3 PM
Pamela Nardi (375-6323)



Adult day programs offer older adults companionship along with planned social and recreational activities. It often provides a break from caregiving and time for other matters. Includes lunch and snacks.

Self-Care Activity: Six Questions to Ask Yourself

Self-care is looking out for your own welfare- making sure your own needs are being met- as well as others. It helps you maintain the balance needed to continue caregiving in a loving and successful manner. Jane Hamilton, MSN, RN, suggests family caregivers consider the following six questions in self-reflection or discussions:

Q 1: What are the major symptoms that show I am experiencing caregiver stress?

Symptoms can be physical (e.g., headaches, fatigue), emotional (e.g., crying, resentment), mental (e.g., boredom, denial), social (e.g., isolation, quarreling), occupational (e.g., absenteeism), spiritual (e.g., hopelessness). “It is essential to be aware of stress-related symptoms; left unchecked, that can lead to stress-related illnesses.”



Q. 2: What causes my caregiver stress?

Causes may come from within you (difficulty communicating, exhaustion), from the person needing care (complex needs, dependency, difficult behavior) or elsewhere (e.g., difficulties with professional caregivers, lack of knowledge or skills). “Only by identifying what causes your stress can you take corrective steps.”

Q. 3: If I adjust my attitude, would that help relieve some of my stress? If so, what are the negative thoughts I should let go of and what positive thoughts should replace them?

Question negative assumptions. “Silently or aloud affirm your strength and ability to cope.”

Q. 4: What stress-numbing behaviors do I turn to for relief? Am I overly reliant on these? What healthier practices could replace current self-numbing behaviors?

Stress-numbing behaviors include blaming, drugs (including too over-reliance on

caffeine), overeating, drinking,...” These behaviors numb the distress of being a caregiver but do nothing to help the body, mind or spirit....they give the illusion of self-care, but if overused...can create more stress.

Q. 5: What healthy self-care practices have already helped me handle stressors that are beyond my control? What practices could be soothing, energizing, fun, relaxing or feel like a treat?

“Choose things that are good for your body, heart, mind and spirit...some are soothing and help you calm down...others involve self-discipline; although less pleasurable (initially), in the long run...may lead to a greater sense of well-being. Examples:

Physical: getting a massage, exercise...

Emotional: reading/viewing things that make you laugh, using a conflict resolution strategy you’ve learned, saying “no when you want to or need to.

Mental: learning new things, creating plans, rephrasing thoughts (thinking optimistically).

Social: Engaging in a hobby, using support systems, taking time off.

Occupational: Pacing yourself.

Spiritual: Praying, being in touch with nature, reading inspirational poetry or other material.

Q. 6: What one or two things will I do to care for myself today?

Name the challenge. Brainstorm options. State desired outcomes. Write an action plan that is thought through enough to be realistic and more than wishful thinking (something that “I can do and that I will do!”).



(From an article by Jane Meier Hamilton in the Winter 2012 issue of *Care Advantage*. View the entire article online at www.alzfdn.org/Publications/carecurrent.html)

Feeling Stretched?

Let's Face It...

Caring for someone with a chronic illness such as dementia, heart disease, Parkinson's Disease or stroke can be stressful physically, emotionally and financially.



Balance Your Life

**Powerful
Tools
for Caregivers**

Spring 2012

Powerful Tools for Caregivers Classes

Powerful Tools for Caregivers is a six-week educational program designed to provide you with the tools you need to take care of *yourself*.

You will learn to:

- Reduce stress
- Improve self-confidence
- Better communicate your feelings
- Balance your life
- Increase your ability to make tough decisions
- Locate helpful resources

The program consists of six - 90 minutes class sessions held weekly and is offered free of charge to caregivers.

Not intended for professional caregivers

March 28— May 2 (Wednesdays)

10:30 AM-Noon

at Brookdale Senior Living
103 Bundy Rd., Ithaca, NY

Pre-registration is Required

**To register or inquire about the program, Call:
Tompkins County Office for the Aging, 274-5482**

Powerful Tools for Caregivers is offered by the Caregivers Resource Center of the Tompkins County Office for the Aging, with support from Lifelong, Cornell University, and the Long Term Care Services Unit of the Tompkins County Department of Social Services

News and Notes

Home Repair Help

The Finger Lakes Independence Center (215 5th St., Ithaca) is hosting one-to-one information sessions on Wednesday, March 28 to provide home repair assistance, answer questions, and take applications for low income single family homeowners in need of home repairs. Grant money is available for repairs such as roofs, furnaces, grab bars, ramps, walk-in showers, and hot water heaters. Appointments will be scheduled from 11:00 AM to 3:00 PM. To schedule an appointment RSVP to Bishop Sheen Housing- (585) 657-4114 by March 27.



Medicare Basics

A free class for those trying to understand the complex maze of options with Medicare, is being offered at Lifelong (119. W. Court St., Ithaca) on Thursday, May 10 from 1:30-3:30 PM. Come learn about Medicare Parts A, B and C, and Part D (Medicare Prescription Drug plans) and EPIC (New York State's Elderly Pharmaceutical Insurance Coverage). Other topics will include: Medigap plans, Medicare Savings Plans (which provide help paying for Medicare Part B), Extra Help (which provides help paying for Medicare Part D), and how other health insurance plans work together with Medicare.

Medicare
A-B-C-D

Financial Concerns for Older Consumers

Michael Danaher, an assistant attorney general from NY State (Binghamton Office) will offer a workshop on April 18 from 2:00-4:30 PM at Longview (1 Bella Vista Dr., Ithaca) helping attendees understand personal finance instruments that have been developed or expanded in recent years including reverse mortgages, annuities, internet banking, and credit and debit cards that have different requirements and costs. He



will also cover scams on the internet and by mail that continue to target older people, legal issues of financial contracts, financial exploitation, and what can be done to protect older adults. The workshop is part of the Ithaca College Gerontology workshop series (\$20 fee/\$12 for retirees.) To register, visit www.ithaca.edu/gps/gerontology. Call 274-3143 or gps@ithaca.edu for more information.

National LGBT Support Groups

SAGE (Services and Advocacy for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Elders) is starting national telephone support groups for LGBT older adults and their caregivers. Caregiver Support Group, facilitated by social workers, the LGBT older adult group and the caregiver group are safe, confidential, and nurturing spaces to gain support and advice. If you are interested in joining the National Caregiver Support Group or the National Support Group for LGBT Older Adults please contact aumhoefer@sageusa.org or via phone: 212-741-2247 x294.



GPS Tracking Systems

Monthly subscription services can play a part in keeping track of loved ones with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias. Following are two of the existing services. Both involve wearing or carrying a locator device that receives signals from satellites or nearby cell towers to approximate the person's location.



Comfort Zone, sponsored by the Alzheimer's Association. Visit www.alz.org/comfortzone/ or phone 877-259-4850.

BreadCrumbGPS, sponsored by the Alzheimer's Foundation of America. Visit www.breadcrumbgps.com or phone 888-708-3604 or email info@breadcrumbgps.com.

Five Ways to Talk with a Parent about End of Life Plans

Jo Myers, author of *Good to Go- the ABC's of Death and Dying*, offers these suggestions for the sensitive subject discussing end-of-life plans.



Keep it Light. Have the talk at a time that is not serious. Consider designing a pre-planning checklist that you and other family members present can use at the same time for their own planning “in the event something happens to me.” That way “Dad won’t feel so ‘singled out.’”

Immediate family only. A more intimate time with immediate family may be appreciated more and may help everyone be more open to the discussion.

Don’t make it an intervention. Start by sharing story of another family in a similar situation and talk about how “you are getting your affairs in order.”

Make good use of a holiday gathering— when all family members are present. Perhaps the oldest sibling could initiate the discussion, but make sure no one feels left out.

Limit initial expectations. Allow your parent time to process the proposals. It might be easier than you imagine.

Help (Not) Wanted

Dr. Amy D’Aprix of Home Instead Senior Care offers five strategies when a senior is resistant to assistance:

Understand where the resistance is coming from.

Explain your goals (you want as much independence as possible for your parent.)

Bring in outside help (e.g., doctor, long-term care assessment by a nurse)

Research your options to find the best resources for your loved ones.

Respect your parent’s decisions (if they are of sound mind, it is ultimately their decision.)

Excerpts from a Letter

...sent by a member of our Alzheimer’s Support Group a couple weeks after the death of her husband:



“I’m doing quite well and have all kinds of support, from family and friends. One of the blessings of Alzheimer’s is that grieving takes place all along the way, as one loses more and more of the person you once had in your life. I’ve just finished writing my annual holiday letter to about 150 friends from over the years...In that letter I said I had lost my beloved companion a good while ago when he became unable to follow a conversation because he couldn’t remember more than one idea at a time, and that for only about 30 seconds.

There are many other things that didn’t disappear, among them his ever-present expressions of love for me, which of course I miss a lot. Perhaps strangely, the thing I am missing the most is simply his presence. It seems so odd to do things entirely by myself, because except when he slept (which was lots!) we did everything together...

I really valued my many years in your support group, and I know I will miss it...I’m not there yet, but I anticipate a kind of rejuvenation of my entire life as I am released from caregiving, and I don’t know how it will turn out...

“A big thank-you hug for all the benefits I’ve received from the group.”

*Wishing you all the best,
(Name withheld)*

Smoothie Recipe from a recent caregiver

“My mother passed away (last year)...I guess you may as well take me off the newsletter list. Thanks for including me. I’ve recently had a lot more contact with the elderly have recently, which has made me aware of how so many don’t like to cook/clean up and therefore have atrocious diets...my mom was like this and it clearly took years off her life.

It occurs to me that Smoothies could be a fantastic way to get some fruit and veggies into older people’s diets. They’re delicious, incredibly easy, involve no cooking, are cheap, the cleanup is so easy it’s mind-boggling, and they’re super healthy. My favorite:



- One banana
- about ¾ cup frozen blueberries
- about ½ cup frozen pineapple
- ¾ cup almond milk
- optional: ¾ cup raw spinach

I don’t measure anything. Just throw it all in the blender and let 'er rip. To clean up, I put some warm water in the blender, a dollop of dish detergent, run the blender and rinse.

I hope you can use this.
(name withheld)

(Note from editor: I ran this by our nutritionist at the Office for the Aging and she replied “the smoothie is a great idea! Simple and nutritious. It calls for almond milk. This is a healthy choice- good for lactose intolerant people and low in calories and saturated fat. High in antioxidants. However, cow’s milk can also be a good choice too (8 grams of protein, Vit. A&D and Calcium) and it may be cheaper. Depending on the individual both choices would be acceptable.)

Medications Management

Pharmacists are a great resource. Not only can they look over medications lists and help pinpoint any side effects you may be experiencing, but they also might be able to refer you to area specialists, can tell you which offices run smoothly, and give you questions to ask your doctor. Your pharmacist can even sign appeal letters to your insurance company listing other medications you have tried and stating that the medication desired is appropriate for the condition.



Switching Medicare plans during the year

Did you know that EPIC members don’t have to wait until the fall “open enrollment period” if they want to:

- Switch from one Medicare drug plan to another,
- Leave a Medicare Advantage health plan that has included drug coverage and go back to original Medicare and sign up for a stand-alone Medicare drug plan, or
- Leave a stand-alone Medicare drug plan and join a Medicare Advantage plan that includes drug coverage.

People are eligible for the New York State EPIC program if their annual income in the prior year was less than \$35,000 (\$50,000 if married). If some is belong to a state pharmaceutical program such as EPIC, Medicare allow them one extra SEP per year (special enrollment period) where they can switch drug plans



Contact Lifelong or the Office for the Aging for an application for the EPIC program.

Alzheimer's Page:

Help! I'm Driving and I Can't Find My Way Home!

Current thinking about what really happens when an individual with dementia goes missing while driving is off track, based on a new study by experts on the issue...Researchers at the College of Nursing at the University of South Florida conclude that a missing incident can happen at any stage of dementia and that most lost drivers have not "wandered away."

Rather, more than 60 percent of drivers with dementia went missing while on a routine, familiar—and caregiver-permitted—trip that they had successfully handled in the past, including driving to medical appointments, restaurants, shopping and friends and family...This is in stark contrast to the stereotype of lost drivers being able to find hidden keys or leave while the caregiver is unaware.



Once the mistake is made, some drivers cannot recover and find themselves miles from their intended destination—in fact, sometimes even over 1,000 miles. Other activities that resulted in a missing incident included driving a route that was out of the ordinary or driving away from home while agitated....

Men more likely to have an incident

Almost 75 percent of drivers who went missing were male, while in the general population, about one-third of people with Alzheimer's are male. Males being cared for by spouses versus other family members were more likely to have an incident. This may be related to males having been the predominant family drivers in those drivers age 70 or older, the authors suggested...About 60 percent of persons with Alzheimer's disease and other

dementia's will have a missing incident at some point in the course of the disease, due to common symptoms like memory loss, diminished problem-solving abilities and confusion. The unpredictable nature of these missing incidents makes prevention challenging.

Sign that driving has become unsafe

While missing incidents can happen despite the most attentive caregiving, some common signs that driving has become unsafe include:

- Having minor accidents or near misses
- Getting lost on familiar roads
- Having other drivers honk at you often
- Being confused or disoriented when driving
- Making slow or poor driving decisions
- Failing to observe traffic signs or signals
- Getting traffic tickets
- And having "gotten lost" before

Experts say caregivers should be aware of the potential for a missing incident and should consider having the person assessed by a driving specialist, usually an occupational therapist. A medical evaluation may uncover health problems that affect driving, and a physician may suggest restrictions or driving retirement due to safety reasons.

Among other steps, caregivers should ensure that a person with dementia wears an identification bracelet, and they should consider a locating technology that can help caregivers and law enforcement find a person who has gone missing.

*(Reprinted with permission from the Winter 2012 issue **care ADVantage**. View the entire article online at www.alzfdn.org/Publications/carecurrent.html A free subscription to the magazine is available to those who wish it.)*

Spring Workshop Opportunities for Dementia Caregivers

The Basics: Memory Loss, Dementia and Alzheimer's Disease

Thursday, April 19, Noon-1:30 PM

Cooperative Extension, 615 Willow Ave., Ithaca

Jessica Cornell, Associate Program Director for the CNY Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association, will cover essential topics including, a general overview of Alzheimer's and dementia, symptoms and stages of the disease, communicating with someone who has Alzheimer's, and behaviors related to Alzheimer's. It will conclude with a discussion of available programs and a question and answer session. Call the Office for the Aging (274-5492) to pre-register, if possible. Free.

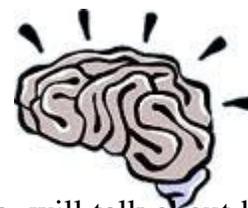


Crosstrain Your Brain

Monday, April 9, 5:00 PM

Clare Bridge, 101 Bundy Rd., Ithaca

Jane Kirby, Divisional Memory Care Specialist for Brookdale Senior Living, will talk about how to keeping your mind active, engaged, and challenged may diminish/offset the signs and symptoms of Alzheimer's and dementia. Free. Light refreshments will be served. For questions, contact Amy Rebera, 351-7857.



Inside the Dementia Epidemic: A Daughter's Memoir

Thursday, May 3, 6:30 – 8:00 PM

Lifelong, 119 W. Court St., Ithaca

Martha Stettinius the author of the forthcoming book: *Inside the Dementia Epidemic: A Daughter's Memoir*. Martha lives here in Central New York and is familiar to many our readers as a writer, editor, writing workshop instructor and as a "sandwich generation" mom—a wife, mother of two teenagers, and the primary caregiver for her mother. She is also serves as a volunteer representative for New York State for the National Family Caregivers Association. She will speak about her upcoming book and answer questions people may have about caregiving and finding support. (You can visit her website at www.insidedementia.com to learn about resources for caregivers and her upcoming book.). Free. Pre-registration is suggested, but not required. Call the Office for the Aging, 274-5492.



*Also, the Alzheimer's Association is sponsoring a "DEMENTIA CARE 2012" full-day workshop on May 9 at the DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel in Syracuse featuring author Patti Kerr whose talk will discuss "What I Wish Someone Had Told Me." For other workshop titles, fees, and other details, visit <http://www.alz.org/centralnewyork/> or call (315) 472-4201.

The Caregivers' Resource Center and Alzheimer's Support Unit

Please call or visit us at the Tompkins County Office for the Aging in the County Courthouse basement, 320 North Tioga St., Ithaca. Open weekdays, 8:30 AM - 4:30 PM.

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Websites of Interest to Family Caregivers:

Tompkins County Office for the Aging: www.tompkins-co.org/cofa

* Click on "Newsletters" to access current and back issues of this newsletter.

* Click on "Local Resources for Older Adults" for Tompkins County resource guides for older adults and other publications of the Tompkins County Office for the Aging.

Family Caregiver Alliance: www.caregiver.org

Next Step in Care: www.nextstepincare.org

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This newsletter is made possible in part by a grant from the NYS Office for the Aging.