



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 2010

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The Emotional Challenges of Caregiving

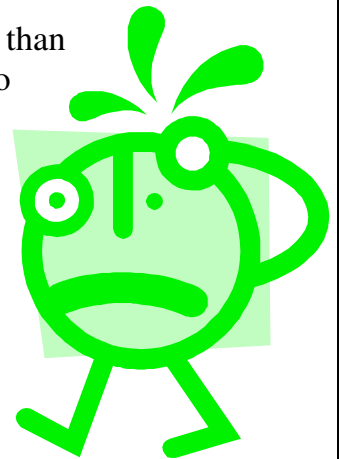
Caring for others is filled with many mixed and varied emotions such as feelings of love, loss, anger, affection, sadness, frustration and guilt. It's not uncommon for family caregivers to feel lonely and isolated. It takes a lot of physical, mental spiritual *and emotional* energy to care for a loved one.

Caregivers often experience a higher rate of stress, anxiety, and depression than those who aren't caregivers. You've probably heard it before—you need to take care of yourself! That can seem overwhelming and often requires energy and support to help make some changes.

The Importance of Emotional Support

It's important for you to feel emotionally supported. Current research is clear that those who get emotional support while caregiving fare far better and provide care longer than those who don't.

Family and friends, while a valuable emotional support system for some, may not always be available or particularly helpful now. This is not unusual. Changing family roles, unresolved past family dynamics, and stress brought on by your loved one's health can strain even the best of support systems and relationships.



(Continued on page 3)

Winter Caregiver Groups

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



Caring for Aging Parents

- Open to those caring for parents or other elderly relatives or friends.
- Meets on the 3rd Wednesday each month:
(March 17, April 21, May 19)
7:00 – 8:30 PM at Lifelong, 119 W. Court St.
- Sponsored in cooperation with Lifelong

Alzheimer's & Other Dementia Caregiver Support Group

- Open to those caring for loved ones with Alzheimer's or other cognitive impairments
- Upcoming monthly meetings:
(March 23, April 27, May 25)
- 1:00 - 2:30 PM in the Office for the Aging Conference Room (320 N. Tioga St., Ithaca)

Parkinson's Support Group

- Open to Parkinsonians and their Caregivers.
- Meets Quarterly :
(Next Meeting: April 21)
2:00 PM - 3:30 PM at Cooperative Extension, 615 Willow Ave., Ithaca

Sponsored in cooperation with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County

Evening Alzheimer's Group

In addition to the daytime group (above), people caring for loved ones with Alzheimer's or related disorders can also attend a group that meets at 5:30 PM on the 1st Wednesday of each month (April 7, May 5, June 2). It meets at Lifelong, 119 W. Court St.. For information, call the Alzheimer's Association at 330-1647.

Local Caregiver Services

Caregivers' Resource Center & Project CARE Services

Tompkins County Office for the Aging

David Stoyell, Katrina Schickel, and Marilyn Roberts (274-5482)

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 who are having difficulty paying for those services. Call Trina to discuss your needs.



In-Home Counseling & Respite Service

Family and Children's Service

Jessica Gosa (273-7495)



A caregiver counselor will visit family caregivers and help them work through complex caregiving issues or for emotional support. This program also offers grant-funded home health aide respite service to give caregivers a needed break.

Adult Day Program

Longview Adult Day Community

Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, 9 am-3 pm
Marilyn Strassberg (375-6320)

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. Possible partial scholarship for low-income applicants

The Emotional Challenges of Caregiving

(continued from cover page)

Expanding Your Emotional Support Network

You may need more or a different kind of emotional support than your current support network can offer. What could help you feel more supported?

- A few hours for yourself?
- More information about your loved one's disease or condition?
- Getting some help solving caregiving problems?
- A sympathetic ear...someone who can listen without judging?
- Spending time with others, especially those in similar situations?

If any of these things would help you feel more supported, there are a variety of family caregiver support services available locally that offer this kind of emotional support, information and knowledgeable advice.



Family Caregiver Information, Assistance, and Consultation

Experienced Caregiver specialists or advocates offer you practical advice and emotional support. Either in person, or by phone, these professionals listen to your questions and concerns and understand the challenges you face. *(See page 2 for more on the Caregivers' Resource Center.)*

Family Caregiver Counseling

A counselor can help you learn to cope more effectively with the emotional demands, or even depression, that can result from caregiving. A counselor can help you work through feelings of grief and loss, problem solve difficult relationships or situations, and work through any stress, anger and guilt related to caregiving. *(See*

page 2 for more on Family and Children's Service Caregiver Counseling.)

Training

Powerful Tools for Caregivers is an educational series specifically for family caregivers caring for someone with a chronic illness. You will learn a variety of self-care strategies to reduce your stress, communicate more effectively with family and healthcare providers, deal with difficult feelings, and make tough caregiving decisions. *(See pages 4-5 for upcoming classes and workshops for family caregivers.)*

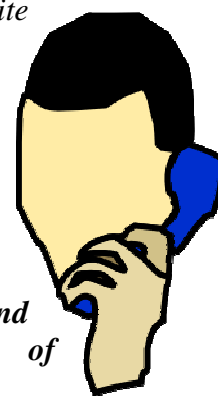
Caregiver Support Groups

Support Groups offer an opportunity to share your thoughts, ideas, and suggestions, compare notes with others in a similar situation, a safe place to express your feelings, and a way to feel less alone. *(More on page 2.)*

Respite Care

Respite care is a service where another trained person or staff at a facility provides short-term care for a few hours to a few days for your loved one giving you some time away from caregiving. Respite care can be in your home, through an adult day program, or at a residential care facility. *(Call the Caregivers' Resource Center, 274-5492 at the Office for the Aging, to discuss respite options and financial help available to those having trouble affording respite care.)*

Often, it only takes a phone call. Take a step and make sure you have the emotional support you need today!



(Reprinted from the Aging and Disability Services website of Washington State.)

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

A Legacy Health System Program

Spring 2010

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, 2 ½ hour class sessions held weekly and is offered free of charge to caregivers.

Not intended for professional caregivers

[Pre-registration is required.](#)

March 22 - April 26, Mondays 6:00 - 8:30 PM
Lifelong, 119 W Court St. Ithaca

(If you are interested in attending, call ASAP as the class begins soon.)

Call 274-5491 to register or with questions

Powerful Tools for Caregivers is offered by the Caregivers Resource Center of the Tompkins County Office for the Aging, with support from the Community Health Foundation of Western and Central New York, Kendal at Ithaca, Lifelong, Cornell University, Tompkins County Department of Social Services and the Greater Ithaca Activities Center

Other Spring Workshop Opportunities for Caregivers

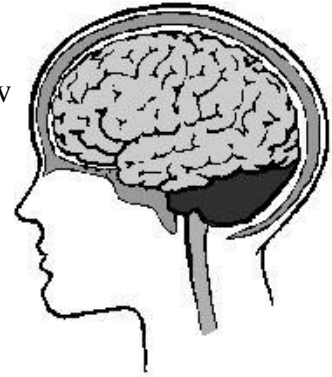
Workshops offered by the Caregivers' Resource Center:

The following workshops are offered free of charge at the Cooperative Extension Education Center (615 Willow Avenue, Ithaca). Call the Office for the Aging to register or for details (274-5492). Pre-registration is encouraged, but not required.

Alzheimer's: Managing Challenging Behaviors **Friday, April 16, Noon-1:30 PM**

Michael Massurin, Director of Programs and Services for the CNY, Director of Programs and Services for the Alzheimer's of Central New York, will discuss what causes dementia-related behaviors like suspicion, repetition, sundowning, agitation and aggression and how to respond to these behaviors.

Bring your brown bag lunch if you wish. Beverages provided.



Legal and Financial Concerns for Caregivers **Thursday, May 20, Noon – 1:30 PM**



Marcie Finlay, a local elder law attorney, will address common legal and financial concerns of the elderly and their caregivers such as planning for the expense of long-term care and planning for incapacity (advance directives, guardianship, trusts).

Bring your brown bag lunch if you are coming on your lunch break. Beverage and snack provided.

Gerontology Institute

The Ithaca College Gerontology Institute Spring workshop series is held at Longview, 1 Bella



Vista Dr., Ithaca. Workshops run from 2:00-4:40 PM with a registration fee of \$20 or \$12 for retired persons. For more info or to register call Marilyn Kinner at 274-1967 or visit www.ithaca.edu/agingworkshop.

April 21: *New Thoughts on the Art and Science of Elder Care: Recognizing and Treating Depression in Elders and their Caregivers.* Present: Lisa Kendall, LCSW-R, CSW-G.

April 28: *A Differential Diagnosis of Dementia.* Presenter: Frederick Marshall, MD.

Lifelong Workshops

The following programs in the Lifelong Learning series are held at Lifelong, 119 W. Court. St., Ithaca. Call Lifelong to for info or to register (273-1511).



Lifelong

April 14, Noon- 1:00 PM:

Doctor-Patient Relationships: Are you (and your loved ones) getting the Most out of yours? Presenter: Jane Baker Segelken, MSW. \$10.

April 14, 21, and 28: 5 PM-7PM.

Alzheimer's Project: an HBO Series. Led by Mike Massurin, CNY Alzheimer's Association. \$30.

April 28, 10AM-Noon:

Planning for Funeral Needs. Presenters: David Bandler and Wayne Sinclair, Funeral Consumer Alliance of the Finger Lakes. Free.

Wise Talk

Wise Talk is a mediation service for elders and caregivers provided by the Community Dispute Resolution Center (CDRC).



Wise Talk issues include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Caregiver responsibilities and support
- Intra-family disputes
- Guardianship Issues
- Grandparent visitation rights
- Grandparents as guardians
- Advance Directives/End of Life issues
- Health Care/ Insurance Benefit Disputes
- Estate Planning and distribution
- Financial Management/debt issues
- Transferring family-owned business/ estates
- Long-term care decisions
- Nursing home/Assisted Living Conflicts
- Landlord-tenant or neighborhood complaints.

To discuss your situation and whether the Wise Talk mediation service might be a help, call CDRC 273-9347 (ext 203).

Alzheimer's Resources

The University of Albany School of Social Welfare has compiled an excellent listing of Alzheimer's Disease Resources that you can access on the web at

www.albany.edu/aging/resources

In particular, if you are having difficulty finding appropriate activities for a loved one with dementia, make sure you look at some of the suggestions in the section titled "Activities for People with Alzheimer's and Other Forms Dementia." If you don't have Internet Access, call the Office for the Aging to be sent printouts of some of the pages.



Checklists and Forms

Family Caregivers can sometimes benefit from using checklists as organizing tools so they can tackle a challenge in a systematic way. Following is a sampling of some of the checklists and forms you can get online at www.caregiverslibrary.org.

If you don't have Internet access, you can call the Caregivers' Resource Center at the Office for the Aging and ask to be sent those that interest you.



Housing

- *Home Modifications Checklist:* How to safety-proof a loved one's home.
- *Assisted Living: Costs and Contracts-* a lists of questions (financial, personal and health, and safety, amenities, and other issues to consider) when you and your loved one visit an assisted living facility.
- *Nursing Home Checklist-* Basic questions to ask when you visit a nursing home.

Physical and Emotional Health

- *Appointment information:* to help keep track of your loved one's medical appointments.
- *Caregiver's Log:* Use copies of this form to monitor daily changes and help with communication among care providers working in shifts.
- *Choosing the Right Doctor:* Questions and steps as you and your loved one evaluate physicians.
- *Making a Personal Medical History Chart:* A sample chart to help you document your loved one's medical history.
- *Weekly Medicine Chart:* A form to help your loved one.

Planning and Assessment

- *Caregiver Decision Questionnaire:* A brief list of questions to help you set priorities and solve caregiving problems.
- *Driver Assessment Checklist:* for those unsure about their loved one's ability to drive.
- *Needs Assessment Worksheet:* This will help you and other family members determine what types of assistance your loved one needs.
- *Caregiver's Document Organizer:* A form that will help you identify, located and organize important documents you will need as a primary caregiver.
- *Personal Records:* A form to help you keep track of your loved ones personal records and other important information.
- *Funeral Planning forms:* issues to consider and recording wishes of loved one.

Grants for Home Modifications

Better Housing for Tompkins County, Inc. (BHTC) has been awarded a \$200,000 Access to Home Grant through the New York State Housing Trust Fund Corporation. These funds allow BHTC to help Tompkins County residents with physical and developmental disabilities, as well as frail elderly, to remain independent by providing accessibility modifications to their homes. Under the program, only home modifications that enable residents to remain in, or return to their own homes, will be made. Call Better Housing, 274-2187, for details.

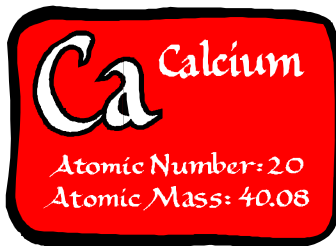
There are also other sources for funds for home modifications for the low-and-moderate income frail elderly. Call the Weatherization and Home Repair Program (WRAP) at the Office for the Aging, 274-5498, to discuss options.

Key Supplements for Dental Health

By Don Deems, DDS

Dentists have been promoting the use of calcium and vitamin D supplements for years, but only about 7% of adults consume minimum amounts of these important nutrients, according to the federal Institute of Medicine's Food and Nutrition Board.

The Board has recommended a total intake from diet and oral supplementation of 1,200 milligrams (mg.) per day of calcium and 400 International Units (IU) per day of Vitamin D for persons aged 51-70. Based on the average figures, adult men and women in the U.S. need to consume at least 500 to 600 mg. more calcium each day just to meet their minimum needs. Even greater intakes of calcium and vitamin D are needed to offset the deficit conditions adults are already experiencing.



Calcium and Vitamin D are essential for healthy bones, teeth and gums. Vitamin D stimulates the antimicrobial proteins, helps prevent gum disease and is important for overall health.

A survey was recently conducted to evaluate consumption levels of calcium and vitamin D. Ninety-three percent of the subjects had insufficient calcium and vitamin D intake; 88% took oral calcium supplements, averaging about 800 mg. per day; 29% took vitamin D supplements, averaging about 430 IU per day; 64% took both supplements. Surprisingly, more men than women chose to take both supplements.

About 12% of people in the study took bone-active prescription drugs such as Fosamax. Yet

only half of those patients took any supplementation for Vitamin D and calcium.

Levels of supplementation among the study participants were insufficient to prevent deficiency of these nutrients. In dentistry, the supplementation of vitamin D and calcium is essential of the vast majority of adults over age 50 to help prevent tooth loss due to gum disease.

The federal Food and Drug Administration(FDA) and other experts are seriously considering a significant increase in the minimum recommendations, due to the near epidemic proportion of people testing too low for vitamin D. The second biggest health problem in the world, according to the World Health Organization, is osteoporosis. *We have not seen such an epidemic of low vitamin D levels since the early 1940's*, when the FDA stepped in to require the fortification of certain common food products with vitamin D. In 2001, many experts began noticing the alarming rise in deficient vitamin D levels and this continues today.



For your health (*and that of your care partner*)—both general and dental—have your calcium and vitamin D levels checked and discuss the results with your doctor. Take calcium and vitamin D supplements if you do not get sufficient levels in your diet. This is especially important if you are over age 50.

(Reprinted from the February 2010 issue of Aging Arkansas. Dr. Deems is a practicing dentist in Arkansas and a nationally recognized speaker and author.)

Plan Ahead for “Transitions in Care”

“**Transitions in Care**” sounds a bit like a move to a residential care facility. But that is not really what experts mean by that phrase when they talk about the need for more attention to be paid by health care providers and caregivers to such transitions in care.

Rather they are talking about transitions which occur when patients move from one care setting to another, for example, from a hospital to home or rehab facility, or when home care agency services start and end. Patient transitions are often complicated, rushed, and beset by errors or misunderstandings. *Next Step in Care* is a website sponsored by the United Hospital Fund. It has this message to family caregivers:

“Taking care of an ill or frail family member is a hard job wherever you do it—at home, in a hospital, in a rehab unit, or in a long-term nursing home. Your first experience of caregiving may follow a crisis, such as a stroke or hip fracture, or it may be a slow process as your family member gradually declines.”

“Whatever the situation or the timing, many family caregivers find that a change in care setting, called a transition in care, is upsetting, disruptive, and confusing. Each transition brings new providers, new rules and regulations, new financial requirements, and new care plans. Often staff are too busy to explain what is going to happen, and you may be too concerned about your family member’s immediate condition to ask a lot of questions about anything else.”

“You will feel more confident if you have a basic understanding of how things are expected to work in the new setting, and a better chance of reducing both your family member’s anxiety and your own. Everyone approaches transitions differently. Some family caregivers handle crises very well, and others are quickly overwhelmed.



You need to find the best way to handle transitions for yourself and your family member, and to enlist the support of others through a difficult time. “

“No two transition experiences are exactly the same, and there is no single pathway to follow. *Next Step in Care*’s guides and other materials will help you get oriented, whatever your starting point and stops along the way.”

(Look them over now—while you are not in crisis mode. You can find them at: www.NextStepinCare.org)

“The materials are organized by the most frequent transitions, starting from hospital, rehab setting, or home. You can follow one path or you can skip around. You can look at the complete list of guides or pick a specific transition. Find the way that works best for you. The next time your loved one is hospitalized, or when you are facing another sort of care transition such as the start of care provided by a home care agency, use the guides given you on this website.”

If navigating your way through a website feels daunting at the time, or you don’t have Internet access, remember to give us a call at the Caregivers’ Resource Center (274-5492) and let one of our staff guide you through the process that is suggested at *Next Step in Care*.

(Excerpts reprinted from the *Next Step in Care* website found at www.nextstepincare.org.)

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 "Gateway to Senior Seniors" at the top of the home page to access our resource guides and back issues of "In Support of Caregivers.")

Family Caregiver Coalition: www.caregiver.org

H.E.L.P (legal and financial issues, California-based): <http://www.help4srs.org>

National Alzheimer's Association: www.alz.org

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