

# Caregiver Corner

... Ideas and information for people caring for others 778-2411

## Six Steps to Getting Help

Asking for help is hard. But chances are having some help will make a difference in your loved one's quality of life and yours.

1. Recognize that caregiving is made up of many tasks.
2. Recognize that asking for help is a sign of strength. It means you have a grasp of the situation and you are problem solving to make things better.
3. Create a list of tasks that need to get done. The list will help validate why you are so overwhelmed and tired.
4. Group the tasks; transportation, chores etc.
5. Write down your caregiving worries. Seeing them in black and white should help diffuse some of their emotion. This also helps you think rationally about what to delegate and what to do next.
6. Share your list with someone you trust. This helps you get comfortable talking about your need for help and may get you some encouragement in the process. Ask for help with something small. Don't get discouraged if you

get rejected at first. It is worth a second try because remember, the goal is to get better care for your loved one and you.

Adapted from an article by Suzanne Geffen Mintz; National Family Caregivers Association. [www.nfcares.org](http://www.nfcares.org)

### Visit "BRAIN TODAY" Blog

News reports about brain health are published every day. Some of the news is objectively reported, some is over-sensationalized, and some is intentionally misleading. This blog is devoted to interpreting the daily news and distilling its true value.

[www.braintoday.blogspot.com](http://www.braintoday.blogspot.com)

### Science Says: Eight Good Reasons to be Socially Engaged

When you are busy caregiving, it is easy to loose touch with friends. Here are some reasons to stay connected:

#### Better Immune System

A [2007 UCLA study](#) confirms that people with strong social connections exhibit stronger immunity against disease.

#### Lower Blood Pressure

For humans, discussing one's problems with someone else is an instant stress buster and can reduce blood pressure.

#### Improve Brain Health and Memory

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A 2008 Harvard School of Public Health study showed that people who are socially active may be less likely to develop cognitive impairment.

#### Increased Physical Activity

Numerous studies demonstrate that social connections lead to increased exercise.

#### Less Depression

Depression is one of the most common challenges of growing older. Untreated, depression can cause a senior to withdraw from social engagement...but spending more time with others can help "jump start" recovery.

#### Pain Management

Physical pain from conditions such as arthritis or osteoporosis also becomes more common as we grow older. People who are coping with chronic pain report the positive effects of participating in support groups with people who are dealing with the same challenges.

#### Nutrition

A 2009 University de Montreal study of hospitalized seniors found "a clear correlation between food intake and social interaction." Seniors who live alone often say that it is "just too much trouble" to fix a nutritious meal for one, and they may skip meals or get in the habit of snacking on junk food. Enjoy meals with a friend.

#### Better Relationships

Married couples who become too insular tend to expect their partner to meet all their emotional needs. In the same way, too much reliance on the parent/child "best friend" bond can also be stressful. Studies show that seniors who socialize with both family and friends have better emotional, intellectual and physical health.

### **Arthritis Tips**

Adopted from an article by Ryan Mackey

Arthritis often means making changes. Here are some tips that may help:

- Arthritis usually affects the hands first; writing may be more difficult. Finding the right balance of comfort may only require a small triangular

shaped cushion found in many office supply stores.

- Do not let your loved one sit idle for long periods of time, they may become stiff. Make sure they move around each hour to create blood flow and movement.
- An exercise routine can actually reduce discomfort through better fitness.
- Arrange cupboards and furniture with reduced flexibility and movement in mind.
- Use safety rails in the bathroom and along stairways so your loved one can maintain their balance and still be provided with reassuring support.
- It may be easier to condense item such as soap or soda into a smaller, lighter bottle that can be lifted more easily.
- In the kitchen, use lightweight dishware and cups with handles.
- Do not be afraid to attend arthritis support groups that can help the family adjust emotionally and better understand the condition.

### **Drug Dispensing**

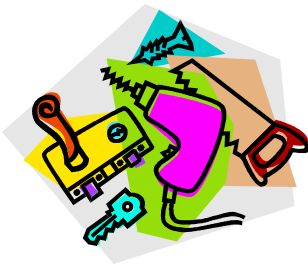
Navigating the dangerous waters of different pill sizes, colors and dosages can be an intimidating experience. Here are some tips for safety and adherence to a schedule:

- Keep all medications in a safe and secure place. Use blister packs that link the pills with specific days of the week. So, in the middle of a busy day, if you suddenly wonder, "Did I give him his morning pills?" all it takes is a quick look at the package to confirm that, yes, it was given. In the

# 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 program of the Legacy Foundation*

# 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. Donations are accepted to cover the cost of materials, which includes a copy of the book, *The Caregiver Helpbook*.

**Not intended for Professional Caregivers**

*Pre-registration is Required*

Class Locations	Day	Dates and Times
Broome County Council of Churches	Tuesday	Oct 6 – Nov 10 3:00 to 5:30 pm
Broome West Senior Center Endwell	Tuesday	Oct 6 – Nov 10 1:00 to 3:30
TBA	TBA	Spring 2010

**To find out about classes and to register call:  
Broome County Office for Aging  
778-2411**

Powerful Tools for Caregivers is supported by a grant from Good Shepherd Foundation and co-sponsored by the Broome County Office for Aging, Broome County Council of Churches, United Health Services Stay Healthy Center, Lourdes Parish Nursing and the Broome County Caregiver Council.

## **Personal Care Contract and Tax Exemptions for Caregivers How They May Benefit You**

A personal care contract is an agreement between an older person and one or more people who promise to provide personal care services to the elder for the rest of the elder's life or for a specified shorter period of time. In long-term care planning, these agreements act to preserve the elder's independence prior to obtaining any help from the government for the otherwise catastrophic costs of a nursing home, assisted living or home care. This contract provides the caregiver payment for his or her services.

It's important to be aware of the benefits and potential problems associated with this kind of contract before entering in to one. One of the benefits is that this is a legally enforceable guarantee that services provided are based on the elder's wishes. With these services, it may be possible to maintain an older person in the community longer. Or, if the elder is in a facility, the contract can guarantee better care and oversight by people the elder knows and trusts. A personal care contract does not lead to Medicaid disqualification and no probate costs or gift tax is charged to the elder due to transfer of assets. There are, however, state and federal income tax concerns.

In addition to the tax concerns, problems with the personal care contract can include the abuse of funds by the designated care provider or unintended consequences due to the care provider's death, illness or other unavailability. There may be liability issues to the caregiver provider due to accident/injury the elder sustains. The elder person's heirs may be dissatisfied with the arrangements or the arrangement may be investigated by Medicaid authorities.

Any person competent to enter into a contract may be the care provider. The elder involved should ideally be able to sign off if it all possible, but if not, there are alternatives.

To learn more about the personal care contract come to the **Caregiver Chat** discussion group on **September 14th from 1-3 PM at the Stay Healthy Center in the Oakdale Mall**. Al Kukol, Esq., from Levine, Gouldin and Thompson will talk about personal care contracts. He will also discuss when a caregiver may claim a tax exemption or a medical expense deduction for care and support provided to an adult relative. Reservations are required as **space is limited**. Contact Judy Bobinski at the Broome County Office for Aging **to register**; the number is **778-2411**.

### **Men Making Meals Fall Class**

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Broome County will offer Men Making Meals this fall at the Trinity Church in Binghamton. Class will be offered on Tuesdays October 21, 28, November 10 & 17. Class begins at 10:30am and runs until 12:30pm with lunch being served as part of each session. The class is free but donations to cover the cost of food are accepted. The course is designed for men with limited cooking knowledge. To register call 778-2411

same vein, all medications should be administered at the same time every day. Modern pills have been designed for specific durations and maintaining a regular dosing schedule will decrease the risk of adverse reactions.

- Dosages of drugs should not be changed without first consulting the physician. Playing with the dosages of blood thinners, heart pills and pain killers can easily have unforeseen and unfortunate side effects.
- Don't start using over-the-counter products, herbs, vitamins and supplements without first discussing it with a physician.
- Check the expiration date on the prescription bottle. Medications that are only used on an as-needed basis may become ineffective if left too long on the shelf. A good example would be nitroglycerin pills for chest pain or a ventolin inhaler.
- Double check the prescriptions that are picked up from the pharmacy against a home list of medications being given. Mistakes can happen.
- If swallowing the medication becomes a challenge, check to see if is available in a liquid or another form.
- Another aspect to consider is whether your loved one really requires all medications. If grandmother, who is well into her ninth decade, is truly failing, does she really need that cholesterol pill? Maybe it's time to have a family discussion with the physician and ask the question, "Have we reached the point where we are treating the disease instead of the patient?" Just because these drugs exist doesn't mean it's in the best interest of the client to use them.

Adapted from an article by M. Simon, a practicing family physician in eastern Canada, that appeared on [www.caregiver.com](http://www.caregiver.com)

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## Close Caregiver Relationship May Slow Alzheimer's Decline

A study led by Johns Hopkins and Utah State University researchers suggests that a particularly close relationship with caregivers may give people with Alzheimer's disease a marked edge over those without one in retaining mind and brain function over time. The beneficial effect of emotional intimacy that the researchers saw among participants was on par with some drugs used to treat the disease. Science Daily (July 23, 2009)

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## Support Group Feature

If you have a heart attack you want cardiac rehab. If you have vision impairment – seek vision rehab.

**The Low Vision Support Group** meets the **second Tuesday** of the month from **10 - 11:00 a.m.** at the AVRE facility, **174 Court Street. Call Annie at 724-2428** for details.

## Dealing with Anger

Anger is a normal part of caregiving. Learn about the high cost of anger and about healthy coping strategies at a workshop at **Family Ties-Binghamton General Hospital on Tuesday September 29 at 5:00 p.m.** The session is free. Call **762-2887** to register and ask about the location of the workshop.

## Volunteering to Help Other Caregivers

Perhaps you are at the end of your caregiving journey. Your experience and wisdom are valuable. If you are interested in volunteering to help other caregivers call DeeDee at 778-2064 to talk about opportunities.

***Faith in Action* Volunteers**  
A Program of Broome County Council  
of Churches

***Faith in Action*** Volunteers is a network of individuals from religious congregations. Its purpose is to assist elders in need, and individuals living with disabilities and their families in an effort to enable them to maintain their independence, dignity and quality of life.

Volunteer caregivers assist with non-medical tasks. They relieve a family caregiver while he or she gets out of the house for a while; visit a lonely homebound elder; they transport those who can no longer drive; help with sorting mail or other paperwork; and they grocery shop for shut-ins and the disabled.

You can learn about the process to enroll a loved one for volunteer caregiver services on at the **Caregiver Chat on October 5<sup>th</sup>**. Chat meets at the **Stay Healthy Center from 1-3pm**. Call **778-2411** to register.

Caregiver Services and its publication,  
*"Caregiver Corner"*  
are supported by a grant from the New York  
State Office for the Aging

**Your September 2009 "Caregiver Corner"**  
Broome County Office for Aging  
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**Broome County Office for Aging**  
*... bringing seniors and services together*