

Caregiver Corner

Ideas and Information for People Caring for Others

July and August 2020 / 607-778-2411 / www.gobroomecounty.com/senior

Caregiver Education Events Continue to be Suspended

Caregiver education events continue to be suspended until further notice. Even though we can't meet face to face, the Caregiver Specialists in Caregiver Services are always available to provide educational information that will help you in your role as a caregiver. They are also available to respond to your questions and address your concerns. Depending on what your needs are, they can link you to services and programs that can provide additional support to you and the person you care for. You can reach a Caregiver Specialist by calling the Office for Aging at (607) 778-2411 or if you prefer, you can email us at OFA@BroomeCounty.us

Caregiver Phone Chats



Let's chat! These informal discussions are open to caregivers of any age.

To join the call:

dial (607) 778-6547

When prompted, enter the following numbers, followed by the pound (#) sign:

Meeting number – 2187#

Attendee Access Code – 123456#

Date: Monday, July 6
Monday, Aug. 3

Time: 1:00-2:30 PM

Date: Wednesday, July 15
Wednesday, Aug. 19

Time: 9:30-11:00 AM

Preserving Routines During Coronavirus Pandemic: Tips for Alzheimer's Caregivers

(March 31, 2020)— The ongoing coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak is disrupting many parts of daily life for everyone, but those challenges are magnified for someone living with Alzheimer's disease. Changes in daily routines can lead to anxiety, confusion, agitation and/or discomfort, which is why the Alzheimer's Foundation of America (AFA) is offering tips to family caregivers about ways to adapt.

“There is often comfort in the familiar,” said Charles J. Fuschillo, Jr., AFA's President & CEO. “As we all adjust to the ‘new normal’ created by the coronavirus outbreak, caregivers should know about steps they can take to adapt routines and help their loved ones stay calm and comfortable.”

Steps caregivers can take include:

- **Maintaining schedules:** If your loved one is used to getting up, eating meals and going to bed at set times, stick to that schedule as much as possible.
- **Bringing outside destinations inside:** If the person regularly eats at a favorite restaurant every Sunday, order in from that restaurant or cook a favorite dish they like to order.
- **Keeping the person active:** Many adult day and respite care programs are closed to protect public health but doing similar activities at home can be beneficial. If the person normally goes to a program at a certain time, do activities that he or she would usually do during that time period (i.e. listen to music, dance, exercise). AFA is also offering these

types of programs “virtually” through the Internet (visit AFA’s Facebook page to see videos of virtual community programs).

- **Remaining connected:** Use FaceTime, phone calls or text messages to keep the person connected with family and friends who would normally visit them in person. If someone calls or FaceTimes with the person regularly because they live out of town, try to keep the contact during the usual time slot.
- **Utilizing familiarity:** Surrounding the person with familiar and positive items, food, music and clothing can be comforting and help reduce potential anxiety and stress. The more familiarity, the better.
- **Being supportive:** Your own body language and attitude can influence the behavior of the person for whom you are caring. Remaining calm and attentive and showing the person love and care can help them adapt to the changes.
- **Creating a daily schedule with lots of visual cues (photos, stickers, drawings).** Create a regular schedule of what the person will be doing every hour, or every half hour, and review it with them and revisit it regularly.

AFA’s Helpline, staffed entirely by licensed social workers trained in dementia care, is open seven days a week to help provide additional tips about adapting routines, caregiving during the coronavirus outbreak and more. The Helpline can be reached by calling 866-232-8484 or visiting www.alzfdn.org and clicking the blue and white chat icon in the right hand corner of the page.

Source: <https://alzfdn.org/preserving-routines-coronavirus-pandemic-tips-alzheimers-caregivers/>

Create Your All-Star Care Team in 5 Steps

By Ashley Huntsberry-Lett

In this country, there is a growing problem regarding a lack of supportive resources for family caregivers. There are government programs, charities and nonprofits that might be able to help intermittently,

but what caregivers often need most is sound advice, regular respite and an extra set of hands.

Friends may scatter when one begins caring for a spouse or parent, and not everyone has siblings or other family members they can depend on to share the load. It is crucial for each caregiver to take inventory of their personal supports in order to utilize their help as efficiently as possible. A carefully selected care team is a necessary complement to a loved one’s plan of care. Use these five steps to build your team.

Step 1: Draft a List of Prospective Team Members

Write down the name of each family member, friend or neighbor that you interact with on a regular basis. Forego any initial judgements or doubts about their usefulness in your care plan. You want to avoid limiting any potential sources of assistance from the very beginning, so just let the ideas flow.

Step 2: Assess Each Individual’s Strengths

Now is the time to assess the strong suit of each person on your list. Is your best friend financially savvy? Can your cousin listen to you vent without interrupting or casting judgement? Does your neighbor offer to keep an eye on Mom when she’s tinkering outside in the garden? Each of these people has specific talents or capabilities that can help you execute your care plan, and most have something to contribute, whether big or small. However, be sure to factor in each person’s attitude before asking them to join your team. Your sister may have plenty of free time to drive Dad to and from doctor’s appointments, but if she brings negativity or criticism to your regular routine, then the drawbacks may outweigh the benefits of her involvement.

Step 3: Create Your All-Star Care Team

Revise your remaining list to create a foolproof roster of people who will assist you with hands-on care and day-to-day tasks. Do not include anyone who may make your duties more difficult. This is your go-to tool for getting outside help, whether it is planned well in advance or needed at the last minute. Include each person’s contact information and, if possible, an outline of their weekly schedule. This will help you quickly reference when a team member is available to pitch in.

Step 4: Assign Roles for Each Member

Once you have narrowed down your list to reliable, positive individuals, identify specific tasks in your care plan that would be a good fit for each one.

Friends and family often wish they could help, but they are usually unsure of what would be useful to contribute. Individuals who have never walked in a caregiver's shoes tend to have a difficult time understanding all of the responsibilities that are involved. It is best for caregivers to be very specific about the kinds of assistance they would appreciate. For example, if your son lives nearby, ask if he can tend to yardwork or any home maintenance projects once or twice a month. If you struggle to prepare dinner on Wednesdays (your busiest day of the week), see if Mom's friend from church can pick her up for a weekly dinner date. The goal of creating this team is to be able to meet your loved one's needs (as well as your own) without every single responsibility falling solely on your shoulders. A care plan that lacks meaningful support and respite time is not viable over the long term.

Step 5: Add Some Pros to Your Team

Relatives and friends aren't the only ones to recruit for your care team. You may feel most comfortable with these people helping out because you know them personally, but remember that not everyone has the personality, time or resources to be even a part-time caregiver. Fortunately, there are a number of professionals who can facilitate the technical aspects of providing care. A financial planner can assist with complicated fiscal decisions, an elder law attorney can ensure that you and your loved one are legally prepared for the future, and a geriatric care manager can coordinate the care your loved one deserves. A social worker or advisor at your local Area Agency on Aging (AAA) can help you find and apply for federal, state and local resources that can assist you in your caregiving duties.

Any remaining gaps in your care plan can be filled by paid caregivers and other services. For example, in-home care and adult day care services can provide supervision and stimulation for your loved one when you need to run errands, attend your own doctor's appointments, enjoy some respite time or go to work. If housekeeping rarely fits into your daily or weekly routine, then hire a cleaning service or arrange to have these tasks added to your home care professional's responsibilities. Healthy meal delivery, pre-sorted prescription medications, and transportation services are some other options that can simplify your schedule and reduce your workload.

A comprehensive team assists with daily duties and can provide valuable back-up care in instances when the primary caregiver cannot see to their responsibilities. The more support a caregiver has, the less likely they are to experience burnout and the more sustainable the care plan will be.

Who Should Join Your Care Team?

- Family and Friends
- Siblings
- Significant Other
- Adult Children
- Close Friends
- Neighbors
- Members of Local Community or Religious Groups
- Grandchildren

Professionals

- Physicians (Primary Care and Specialists)
- Elder Law Attorneys
- Geriatric Care Managers
- Social Workers
- Financial Advisors
- Pharmacists
- Home Care Agencies and Professional Caregivers
- Adult Day Care Centers
- Charities, Organizations and Support Programs
- VA, Medicare and/or Medicaid Advisor(s)

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<https://www.agingcare.com/articles/create-a-care-team-in-5-steps-195525.htm>

The Caregiver Services Program is sponsored by a grant from the Administration for Community Living, New York State Office for Aging, and Broome County.

Contributions are accepted to help support this program. No one is denied service because of an inability or unwillingness to contribute and all contributions are confidential.

To make a contribution, please send checks or money orders to: Broome County Office for Aging, PO Box 1766, Binghamton, NY 13902.

Caregiver Corner

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Prefer to read on-line?

Caregiver Corner is also available on line at <http://www.gobroomecounty.com/senior/cgcnews/>.

If you prefer to read the electronic version, we'd be glad to e-mail you a reminder when new issues are posted; we'll take you off the mailing list for the paper copies. Let us know by emailing:

OFA@BroomeCounty.US

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Thank you!