

Caregiver Corner

Ideas and Information for People Caring for Others

March & April 2022 / 607-778-2411 / www.gobroomecounty.com/senior

Events for Caregivers

Patient Review Instrument (PRI)

Date: Wednesday, March 23rd

Time: 1:00-2:30PM

Location: Virtual Zoom Meeting

Presenter: Tracy Thompson, Clinical Nurse Supervisor for CASA at Department of Social Services

Do you have questions about long term care placement options? Are you questioning if your loved one needs to be placed in a nursing home? Would you like information on the steps and requirements if your loved one needs to be placed in a nursing home? Please join us as Tracy Thompson will cover what a Patient Review Instrument is and how it is used for long term care placement.

Pre-registration is requested: Please call Caregiver Services at (607) 778-2411 to register and receive the Zoom meeting invitation.

Advanced Planning and End of Life

Date: Tuesday, April 5th

Time: 1:00-2:30PM

Location: Virtual Zoom Meeting

Presenter: Rebecca Bradley, Program Specialist with Action for Older Persons, Inc.

Looking for information on how to complete advance directive forms? Rebecca from Actions for Older Persons will provide an overview of the various advance directive options that are available. This includes the health care proxy, living will, do not resuscitate (DNR) document, and medical orders for life sustaining treatment (MOLST).

Pre-registration is requested: Please call Caregiver Services at (607) 778-2411 to register and receive the Zoom meeting invitation.

Caregiver Chat Groups

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



The Stay Healthy Caregiver Chat: Participants will call in using a landline or cell phone.

Date: Mondays, March 7th & April 4th

Time: 1:00-2:30 PM

Dial-In: (607) 778-6547

Meeting Code: 2187#

Attendee Access Code: 123456#

The Wayne Street Caregiver Chat: Participants can use Zoom or call in.

Date: Wednesdays, March 16th & April 20th

Time: 9:30-11:00AM

Zoom address:

<https://broome.zoom.us/j/97041617223?pwd=aHU1ZlhFL1VQSDhybjlDSGxenRkZz09>

ID: 2152617450

Password: 037464

For questions on the Wayne Street Caregiver Chat, call (607) 778-2946 or email

Machelle.spinelli@broomecounty.us

Laughter: Medicine for the Heart

By: Jane E. Maxwell

“Laughter and tears are both responses to frustration and exhaustion. I myself prefer to laugh, since there is less cleaning up to do afterward.” - Kurt Vonnegut

Laughter is like a breath of fresh air that we desperately need. This seemingly simple act affects most of your body systems. Laughter strengthens the immune system by stimulating your body to increase production of immunoglobulin. (Cont'd on next page)

It improves your heart rate and circulation by boosting the oxygen supply to your brain. Laughter controls pain by decreasing muscle tension, distracting attention, and increasing the production of endorphins, natural pain killers. Laughter is like giving yourself an internal massage as it stimulates and soothes. It truly is medicine for the heart.

Sometimes when we feel inept in our efforts to care for our loved one, the healthiest way to respond is to laugh at our own imperfections. We are human and at times say the wrong thing, spill soup down the front of the loved one's shirt, or mess up at the most inopportune moment. But if we can't laugh, all we do is cry.

Humor, like prayer, helps us to rise above our circumstances. Seven years ago, the idea of laughter was difficult for me to apply to the care of my terminally ill husband. Because I had worked as a registered nurse for over forty years, I was much too intent on fixing the symptoms of his illness and controlling his reactions to the chemotherapy and radiation. I was increasing not only my stress level, but also his.

Then as we turned on the TV and radio to some of his old favorites — “I Love Lucy,” “Abbot and Costello,” “All in the Family,” and “Mayberry RFD,” along with the music we grew up with, we began to laugh. Tensions faded, muscles relaxed, pain was lessened and we reconnected. Laughter reminded me that one is much more than his or her illness. We are all persons first, still alive, and able to enjoy levity. Joy is still possible for the patient and the caregiver.

- Try keeping a journal of humorous things you see, hear, or read.
- Place cartoons on your refrigerator or bulletin board. They will be there when you need them.
- Don't put yourself down.
- Call someone today to arrange to meet for a few hours to renew your spirit. It truly will be medicine for your heart.

Adapted From <https://caregiver.com/articles/laughter-medicine-heart/> Copyright 2022, Today's Caregiver and caregiver.com.

Tips for Long-Distance Caregiving

Long-distance caregiving presents unique challenges. If you find yourself in the long-distance caregiving role, here is a summary of things to keep in mind.

1. Know what you need to know as a long-distance caregiver. Experienced caregivers recommend that you learn as much as you can about your family member's or friend's illness, medicines, and resources that might be available. Information can help you understand what is going on, anticipate the course of an illness, prevent crises, and assist in healthcare management. It can also make talking with the doctor easier. Make sure at least one family member has written permission to receive medical and financial information. To the extent possible, one family member should handle conversations with all health care providers.

Try putting all the vital information in one place—perhaps in a notebook or in a shared, secure online document. This includes all the important information about medical care, social services, contact numbers, financial issues, and so on. Make copies for other caregivers, and keep the information up to date.

2. Plan your visits with an aging parent or relative. When visiting your loved one, you may feel that there is just too much to do in the time that you have. You can get more done and feel less stressed by talking to your family member or friend ahead of time and finding out what he or she would like to do. Also, check with the primary caregiver, if appropriate, to learn what he or she needs, such as handling some caregiving responsibilities while you are in town. This may help you set clear-cut and realistic goals for the visit. For instance, does your mother need to get some new winter clothes or visit another family member? Could your father use help fixing things around the house? Would you like to talk to your mother's physician? Decide on the priorities and leave other tasks for another visit.

3. Activities to do when visiting an aging parent or relative. Try to make time to do things unrelated to being a caregiver. Maybe you could find a movie to watch with your relative, or plan a visit with old friends or other family members. Perhaps they would like to attend worship services. (*Cont'd on next page*)

Offer to play a game of cards or a board game. Take a drive, or go to the library together.

Finding a little bit of time to do something simple and relaxing can help everyone, and it builds more family memories. And keep in mind that your friend or relative is the focus of your trip—try to let outside distractions wait until you are home again.

4. Get in touch and stay in touch. Many families schedule conference calls with doctors, the assisted living facility team, or nursing home staff so several relatives can participate in one conversation and get up-to-date information about a relative's health and progress. If your family member is in a nursing home, you can request occasional teleconferences with the facility's staff. Sometimes a social worker is good to talk to for updates as well as for help in making decisions. You might also talk with a family member or friend in the community who can provide a realistic view of what is going on.

Don't underestimate the value of a phone and email contact list. It is a simple way to keep everyone updated on your loved one's needs.

5. Help an aging parent stay in contact from afar.

For one family, having a private phone line installed in their father's nursing home room allowed him to stay in touch. For another family, giving Grandma a cell phone (and then teaching her how to use it) gave everyone some peace of mind. These simple strategies can be a lifeline. But be prepared—you may find you are inundated with calls or text messages. It's good to think in advance about a workable approach for coping with numerous calls.

6. Organize paperwork for an aging parent.

Organizing paperwork is one way that a long-distance caregiver can be a big help. An important part of effective caregiving depends on keeping a great deal of information in order and up to date. Often, long-distance caregivers will need access to a parent's or relative's personal, health, financial, and legal records.

Getting all this material together is a lot of work at first, and from far away it can seem even more challenging. But once you have gathered everything together, many other caregiving tasks will be easier. Maintaining current information about your parent's health and medical care, as well as finances, home ownership, and other legal issues, lets you get a handle on what is going on and allows you to respond more quickly if there is a crisis.

As you're getting started, try to focus on gathering the essentials first, and fill in the blanks as you go along. Talk with the older person and the primary caregiver about any missing information or documentation and how you might help to organize the records. It is also a good idea to make sure that all financial matters, including wills and life insurance policies, are in order. It will also help if someone has a durable power of attorney (the legal document naming one person to handle financial and property issues for another).

Your loved one may be reluctant to share personal information with you. Explain that you are not trying to invade their privacy or take over their personal lives—you are only trying to assemble what will be needed in the event of an emergency. Assure them that you will respect their privacy, and then keep your promise. If they are still uncomfortable, ask if they would be willing to work with an attorney (some lawyers specialize in elder affairs) or perhaps with another trusted family member or friend.

Adapted From <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/eight-tips-long-distance-caregiving>

If you have questions about caregiving, support groups, or caregiver educational programs, please contact the Broome County Office for Aging at 607-778-2411. The Office for Aging also has a variety of caregiver resources that may benefit you in your caregiving role.



“To make a difference in someone's life you don't have to be brilliant, rich, beautiful, or perfect. You just have to care.”

– Mandy Hale

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

Broome County Office for Aging
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PO Box 1766
Binghamton, NY 13902-1766

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Prefer to read on-line?

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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

No longer interested in Caregiver Corner?

If you no longer want a paper copy of Caregiver Corner mailed to you, please contact the Office for Aging by phone: (607) 778-2411 or by email: OFA@BroomeCounty.US and ask to be taken off the mailing list.

Thank you!