



Celebrate National Caregiver Appreciation Month *by Diane Walker, RN, MS*

November is National Caregiver Appreciation Month and it's a great time to recognize and celebrate this special group of people! With more than 25% of the adult population (or 45 million persons) providing care for a chronically ill, aging, or disabled family member, you probably know someone who is a Caregiver—you may simply have to look in the mirror. November is a wonderful time to say, "Great job," and do something special for that Caregiver who provides *special* care to a loved one every day.

If you are a Caregiver, you *should* know that you are at particular risk for a host of mental and physical illnesses, many of which have their roots in stress, exhaustion, and self neglect.¹ Caregivers often lose their support networks and feel isolated from friends they enjoyed. Use this month as a reason to make a change and reach out for help.²

If you know someone who is a Caregiver, take the month of November to put a "4x4 plan" in place. Once a week for each of the four weeks in the month, do something special for that person! And don't wait to be asked to help. Caregivers rarely think to ask for assistance—it's their job! Here are some simple, easy ideas for things you can do to get started:

- ◆ Start by sending them a card to let them know you think they are doing a great job! Everyone likes to know their efforts are appreciated. If it will make them laugh, all the better. It's also a gentle way to open the door to let someone give a

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Life Is What Happens While You're Making Other Plans *by Patricia O'Malley, RN, MSN, JD*

Everyone *plans* to have a healthy child. Everyone *plans* to live a long healthy life. Everyone *plans* for things to go...well...as *planned*! John Lennon said it best, "Life is what happens while you're making other plans."

Parents of disabled children sometimes assume, because their child is unable to act on his or her own behalf, that as the child's parents they retain decision-making capacity past the child attaining his/her legal majority. The community-at-large, which tends to make many assumptions about disabled persons, may routinely continue to cede decision-making to the parents past child's the age of legal majority. This may lull parents into a false sense of assurance that they do not need to seek legal guardianship over the now-adult person still in their care. The legal system does not make automatic assumptions about an individual's capacity/competency until it is asked to

do so; it is therefore, absolutely necessary for parents of disabled children to deliberately seek legal guardianship when the child approaches the age of legal majority in your jurisdiction (age 18-21). The proceedings are often relatively routine, but absolutely provide you with the opportunity to plan for the life your child will lead as you both age and after you're gone.

This type of planning requires a deep breath and the stark realization that you're simply not always going to "be there" for this young person you've nurtured and guided for so many years. That

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Special points of interest:

- Pg 2.—*Shape Up For A Longer Life*
- Pg 3.—*Have a Happy Winter*
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- Pg. 3—*National Cell Phone Do Not Call List*

realization is the first step to making certain that things are taken care of in a way that validates your planning and assures your child's future as you've envisioned it.

Some planners call the first step in the process a "letter of intent." In this communicative document you place such information you would not customarily enter into an estate planning or trust document; things like what you've learned about how your child likes to sleep, where s/he feels safe, the important rituals and routines that reassure and empower him or her in daily life, the name of the people s/he trusts and recognizes and can be relied upon for information and direction in his/her life, your hopes for the types of care your child benefits from the most, his/her food preferences and facts that tend not to change greatly from year-to-year like equipment repair and maintenance schedules and reliable suppliers. This document can be updated from time-to-time without disrupting the legal framework in which your intent will be acted upon and borne out over time.

From there you can begin to look at the types of benefits, health care and other financing issues known about from all your years of carefully parenting your child. Your own estate planning may encompass life insurance to fund a supplemental needs trust for the child. The assets in a supplemental needs trust do not come under the child's control and are not received into the trust as a pour over from direct inheritance. This type of planning takes the input, direction, and knowledge of an experienced special needs trust planning professional. It is advisable to consult that person well in advance, rather than have assets unnecessary transfer by default to the state because of lack of planning.

Questions like where your child will live and who are the best trustee candidates all suddenly come into sharp relief. Having these discussions with the

most interested and involved persons tends to focus everyone's attention on allocation of resources and proper planning. You may find that assumptions you have made were little more than that. Or the older unmarried sister unexpectedly finds the love of her life, has children and residential placement for her brother becomes a better option for everyone concerned, whereas previously it had not been on anyone's radar, including hers. Combinations of day programs and in home care supports may optimize a progressive rather than abrupt transfer of your child's daily care and transportation needs according to a plan. Making progressive changes while you are still alive will ease the transition during the child's lifetime.

The passage of time demands that we recognize our own needs and capabilities and plan ahead for continuation of the loving care we have lavished for so long on our also aging disabled children. A long time friend once shared an epiphany she had while half listening to a flight attendant cover oxygen mask instructions for those traveling with a child. She had to get her own mask on first so she could then assist her child. We best serve the children we have spent a lifetime caring for when we care for ourselves, assess everyone's needs and get necessary legal instruments and loving plans in place to assure their future is as we envision it.

For more information about legal documents, visit the education section of our website, www.caringtimes.org. You can also send a personal question to the author on the *Talk To An Expert* page.

According to practically *everyone*, exercise and a healthy diet are the keys to longer life. According to Steve Zim, a fitness expert, during the fall and winter months we exercise less and tend to gain weight. Here are some simple indoor exercises that Steve recommends. Keep your own limitation in mind.

Hip and leg stretches:

Stand up straight and lift one leg to sitting position to stretch the leg and hip muscle. Do 30 seconds on one side and then switch to the other leg. Do 2 with each leg and gradually increase the number of stretches.

Calf stretches:

Stand facing a wall with your arms stretched out in front of you palms up and touching the wall. Back up two steps, bend to touch the wall and straighten you body like a board. Bend your arms, bring your nose to touch the wall, count to 10 and push back out until your arms are straight. Do 4 stretches. Next time, when you step back, increase your distance from the wall and repeat the stretches. You should feel stretching in the back of your calf. Over time stretch longer and gradually increase the distance from the wall.

What's Coming In The Next Edition?

CARINGTIMES© will be published four time a year, starting in 2008. Our feature article in February will be about **veteran's benefits** for people with MS and you'll meet our new veterans "expert" you can email with personal questions at the website.

Another topic from the "**Six Dimensions of Wellness**" will be covered. Look for the first article on the website.

An article on how to *prepare* to care for aging parents will provide you with handy tips to get ready for the big day.

Have a Happy Winter For A Change!

By Diane Walker, RN, MS

Leading experts now consider depression to be a world-wide epidemic and estimate it will be the *second leading cause of death worldwide by 2020*. For many adults, the winter months can be especially troublesome because of the darker days and longer nights— a condition referred to as a seasonal affective disorder. Since WWII, depression rates have risen tenfold in the US and according to the World Health Organization, the burden of depression has only just begun to be recognized. It's estimated that 25% of the population will experience the disorder by age 75.¹ When older adults become depressed, they are less likely to be diagnosed and then do not receive the treatment they need. Depression is more than unhappiness— it leads to physical illnesses, profoundly affects quality of life, and ultimately can lead to death.

Traditional treatments for depression that include antidepressant medications and psychotherapy only help about half of the individuals who receive this form of treatment.²

The current worldwide attention to the problem



BBC News

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A New Way To Stop ID Theft

According to Bob Sullivan of MSNBC News, there is now a way for you to prevent ID theft. On November 1, 2007, the three credit bureaus allowed everyone to put a security freeze on their credit reports, making it almost impossible for a stranger to steal the information necessary to commit identity theft (IT). Older adults who have all the credit cards they need and don't plan to frequently buy a new car or house will find the process worthwhile, if only for the peace of mind it offers.

This process will not stop someone from non-credit-related forms of IT, such as duplicating your driver's license or using your social security number for employment purposes and it may lead to inaccuracies in your credit report if you move or change your name. But it is a lot less expensive and time consuming than repairing the damage IT can cause.

Sullivan's blog gives a concise overview of the pluses and minuses of the action, lists the web address for the three bureaus (Equifax, Experian and TransUnion) and outlines the steps you will need to take. Why not have a discussion about the process before Thanksgiving dinner? Here is address for his article:

<http://redtape.msnbc.com/2007/11/now-a-way-to-st.html>

Caregiver Appreciation *continued...*

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hand.

- ◆ Make a healthy, freezable dish for dinner. If you earn a free turkey, make it for the family but not during a holiday. Chances are other family members will be around to help out then. Go to www.caringtimes.org for a great Turkey Tetrazzini recipe and make the turkey go farther!
- ◆ Drop off a CD with relaxing music to listen to.
- ◆ Offer to spend a day with the care recipient so the Caregiver can get out of the house and do something for themselves. What about a gift certificate for a massage?
- ◆ Offer to take the care recipient to church or a favorite activity.
- ◆ Drop off a bouquet of flowers or a colorful house plant.
- ◆ Rake the leaves, mow the lawn, shovel the walk.
- ◆ Take the trash out.
- ◆ Stay with the care recipient while the Caregiver walks the dog.
- ◆ Go to the dollar/thrift store and find something funny for the holiday season.
- ◆ Give them a copy of CARINGTIMES©
- ◆ Drop off information about low-cost support services in the area such as day and in-home care and how to select an agency that provides companion or private duty services. www.GriswoldSpecialCare.com

It's not hard to find things to do for a Caregiver. The hardest part may be getting them to accept your actions, so be gentle but persistent in the beginning. Your efforts may be just the turning point to help that person realize they need to take care of themselves too.

¹ S. Crute. "Caring For The Caregiver," AARP Magazine. December 2007, p. 69-77.

² K. Griswold. "Don't Wait! Prevent Caregiver Burnout." www.CARINGTIMES.org

Cell Phone Do Not Call List

Cell phone numbers will be released to those awful telemarketers soon, so you need to protect your number if you want to stop those annoying calls and not be billed for them to boot!. Call this toll free number to have your cell phone number placed on the Do Not Call List for five years. You must call using the cell phone you want blocked. It takes about 20 seconds. Or register online and file complaints at www.donotcall.gov.

888-382-1222

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Depression epidemic *continued...*

has inspired clinicians to develop new, simple tools to diagnosis the illness and new forms of treatment so that more individuals can experience a higher quality of life.

If you visit an older adult this holiday season, look for these warning signs: feeling sad, hopelessness, useless, guilty, inadequate, and like a failure; pessimistic predictions about the future; loss of energy; inability to concentrate; sleeping more or less; sudden loss of or

weight gain; agitation; and loss of interest in pleasureable events and being with people. Because of the importance of this issue, we will post a special article at www.caringtimes.org in December 2007.

¹ World Health Organization. Retrieved November 7, 2007 from <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/health/401901.stm>.

² S. Ilardi, MD. "Simply Happy." *AARP Magazine*, December 2007, p. 52-54.

Find Us On The Web At www.CaringTimes.org.

GRISWOLD SPECIAL CARE



The **CARINGTIMES**®
newsletter and its companion website are a service GRISWOLD SPECIAL CARE offers to Clients, family caregivers, and professionals who care for older adults and individuals living with a disability. Experts in gerontology keep you current with helpful articles, legislative updates, tips on caregiving, news about organizations and more.

On-line Caregiving

Resources

Our website (www.CaringTimes.org) includes a resource center that is designed to help make it easier for you to care for your loved ones in the home. At this site, you will have access to past newsletters, articles about elder care and disability issues, direct access to experts who you can talk with about your personal issues and concerns, and links to national organizations that offer support to family Caregivers. Check the website each month for the latest information. Here are some of the features that are

currently posted:

- ◆ A brochure to prevent falls at home
- ◆ Welcoming A Caregiver Into Your Home
- ◆ Preventing Caregiver Burnout
- ◆ Tax Related Issues
- ◆ Legal Documents: POA and Living Wills
- ◆ Dementia: The Disease and New Hope for Treatment, Parts I and II
- ◆ Home and Community Based Care: What Consumers Want And Need

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