

August 2020

Boomers, Elders, & More E-Newsletter

A Monthly Elder Care Newsletter of Vanderbilt Child & Family Center



VANDERBILT
UNIVERSITY®

Child and Family Center

A Message from the Well-Being Manager

Caregiving often creeps up on you. You start off by going to your aging loved one's house and doing laundry or transporting to a doctor's appointment. You find yourself doing the grocery shopping and refilling prescriptions. Gradually, you are doing more and more. At some point, you realize you have made a commitment to take care of someone else.

Sometimes, caregiving is triggered by a major health event or accident. Life as you know it stops, and all your energy goes to caring for your aging loved one. Caregiving has become your new career, and you adjust to a new normal.

Life is no longer as it once was for all concerned. Your daily routine has changed and so has your thought process, trying to cram everything into one day and realizing it is NOT going to happen. New normal is rearranging your daily schedule to accommodate everyone – aging loved one, members of your immediate family, and yourself.

Your new normal will have a few obstacles here and there; but with perseverance, you will see the fight you never knew you had in you. With your new normal, you learn something – how much stronger you were than you ever imagined.

Sadness with an unexpected setback happens during your new normal, but gives you HOPE for a recovery. Each day, during your new normal, is an opportunity for a New Beginning!

Excerpts from: <https://caregiver.com/articles/new-normal/>



Vanderbilt, The Ohio State University developing ‘socially assistive robots’ to stem loneliness and encourage activity among aging

By Marissa Shapiro



Researchers from Vanderbilt University and The Ohio State University are teaming up to develop next-generation robotic technology that can help older adults living with forms of dementia through a grant from the National Institute on Aging (NIA) at the National Institutes of Health (NIH). The five-year grant, totaling \$3.13 million, will support research and development of robotic framework and methodologies that encourage social interaction among older adults in long term care (LTC) facilities like nursing homes and independent or assisted living facilities.

Social interaction is known to produce positive health benefits among older adults suffering from cognitive impairments including the progression to Alzheimer’s and related dementias. Conversely, without social interaction, older adults may fall victim to

apathy and its ripple effects of loneliness, social isolation and cognitive decline, not to mention the stress and frustration experienced by caregivers. The effects of apathy – the lack of feeling or emotion – among the aging also manifest in the decline of physical health. The stress and anxiety that apathy can produce negatively alters heart health and blood pressure, leading to increased mortality.

Currently, 72% of all adults in LTC facilities experience apathy.

While its necessity has been made clear, there are not enough skilled or well-resourced caretakers to facilitate the kind of social interaction that the growing population of aging adults needs to thrive. By 2034, and for the first time in U.S. history, older adults (people age 65 and older) will outnumber

children under age 18, presenting an impending reality that will need to be accommodated.

To address a growing population and work around the limits of caretakers and to capitalize on burgeoning technology, Nilanian Sarkar, David K. Wilson Professor of Engineering, chair of the Department of Mechanical Engineering and professor of mechanical and computer engineering and a multidisciplinary team of engineers, nurses, physicians and health services researchers from Vanderbilt and The Ohio State Universities explore new opportunities in robotics to facilitate social interaction between aging adults.

Sarkar's project will be conducted jointly with Lorraine Mion, professor of nursing at The Ohio State University and former Independence Foundation Professor in nursing at the Vanderbilt School of Nursing. It will explore how socially assistive robots (SARs) – a type of assistive robot designed specifically for social interactions and capable of autonomously detecting and meaningfully responding to older adults' attention and behavior – can effectively target and engage older adults with Alzheimer's Disease and

related cognitive impairments in LTC environments.

"We aim to create a better quality of life for the aging population of our society," said Sarkar. "While there is no cure for dementia at this point, research shows that if we can keep people mentally engaged and active, we can possibly slow the progression of the disease and the deterioration of their overall health. Our research will help us understand how to create robots to act as a coach as well as a peer to facilitate interpersonal connections in a sustainable, meaningful way."

"We know from research that apathy is the most common neuropsychiatric symptom in older adults with dementia and can have dire effects on both the quality of life for the patient and the emotional stability of the caregiver," said Mion. "What we are seeking to understand is how we can improve engagement strategies using advanced-but-user-friendly robotic systems to stave off apathy and improve lives for these older adults in long-term care facilities."

Find the full article at: <https://news.vanderbilt.edu/2020/06/18/vanderbilt-the-ohio-state-university-developing-socially-assistive-robots-to-stem-loneliness-and-encourage-activity-among-aging/>

Tips for Solo Caregivers

If you're taking care of a loved one on your own,
here's everything you need to know

By Margery D. Rosen | February 2013



The heart
is the
medicine cabinet
of caregiving.
It's where the
miracle drugs of
compassion &
empathy are kept.

Take care of your own health. Most caregivers don't. "They're less likely to go for regular checkups, fill prescriptions, get mammograms, cook healthy meals for themselves or get enough sleep," says Marion Somers, a geriatric care manager. The result: higher levels of stress, depression and anxiety. Be alert to signs of anxiety or depression (irritability, tearfulness, lack of interest in things you used to love to do, trouble sleeping or concentrating) and consult your doctor if necessary.

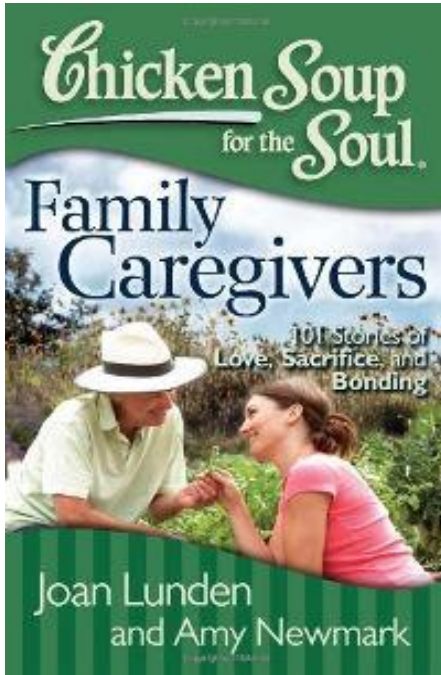
Find kindred spirits. Marathoners who train together go farther because they encourage each other. Joining a support group will help you feel less alone, give you a chance to vent as well as to hear how others are handling similar situations.

Stop beating yourself up. Caregiving triggers a host of difficult emotions: You feel resentful, then guilty about feeling resentful, then angry at having been made to feel guilty. "That doesn't mean you don't love the person you're caring for. It doesn't mean you're selfish. It means you're human," says Barry J. Jacobs, a clinical psychologist. Instead of criticizing yourself or stuffing your feelings inside, write them in a journal, talk about them with a trusted friend or share them with a support group.

Be a little selfish. Ideally, reserve one day a week to take your loved one to an adult care center or hire a home caregiver so you can meet friends, see a movie, or do whatever nourishes your spirit. If your loved one balks at your plan, be firm. You deserve a break, so don't cave in to guilt. At the very least, carve out 10 minutes a day to meditate, listen to music or flip through a magazine.

Let go. Consider whether you're making your situation worse. It's not unusual for caregivers to insist on controlling every aspect of care, but that can actually discourage others from stepping up. "If you try to be Superwoman, people may not realize how much work and time is involved, or even that you want them to help," says Somers.

Find the full article at: <https://www.aarp.org/home-family/caregiving/info-02-2013/tips-for-solo-caregivers.html>



Do you feel alone in your emotions while caring for your aging loved one?

The book of the month is a collection of stories offering support and encouragement for caregivers of all ages, including the “sandwich” generation.

This book offers stories of love and sacrifice. It will inspire and uplift family members who are making a sacrifice to make sure their loved one is well cared for whether in their own home or elsewhere.

10 Facts About Caregiving

1. 1 out of every 4 caregivers say family relationships suffer because of caregiving responsibilities.
2. 30 percent of caregivers said they need help keeping the person they care for safe.
3. 61 percent of family caregivers are women.
4. 42 percent of caregivers spend over \$5,000 annually caring for a loved one.
5. When caring from a distance, family caregivers spend over \$8,000 annually.
6. 16 percent of caregivers quit their job in order to provide care for a loved one.
7. 58 percent of caregivers provide more than 10 hours of care to a loved one each week.
8. More than 34 million people provide unpaid care to someone 18 or older who is ill or disabled.
9. 67 percent of caregivers say they do not go to the doctor because they put their families need first.
10. 27 percent of caregivers are in the sandwich generation caring for a child as well as their parents.

Find the full article at: <https://blog.bayada.com/be-healthy/ten-facts-about-caregiving>

