

August 2021

Boomers, Elders, & More E-Newsletter

Monthly Elder Care Newsletter of the Vanderbilt Child & Family Center

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Child and Family Center

A Message from the Wellbeing Manager

A well-known trait of a family caregiver is the ability to suppress the urge to communicate emotions, regardless of how dire the circumstance. Be it fear or joy, excitement or anxiety, every family caregiver has felt the need to celebrate alone or suffer in silence at the greatness of milestones and the lowest of points.

In the world of caregiving, family caregivers are some of the most silent of sufferers there are. This kind of life only intensifies the condition and its ensuing emotions. Anxiety is compounded with anxiety about having anxiety when there is no release; fears multiply and thrive when they cannot be released; and the silent sufferers only suffer more when they feel they have no community in which to share. It can be some of the loneliest and isolating existences ever.

Family caregiving does not have to be lonely. There are others who are experiencing or have experienced the same emotions as you. Finding an online or local support group can give you the strength to care for your aging loved one and show up the way you want in your caregiving relationship.

One of the main benefits of caregiver support groups is that they provide much-needed social support. This is especially important when family and friends are not supportive. Support group members also validate each other's experiences. It is a relief to know that what you are going through is normal and that you are not the only one with these feelings – negative or positive. Finally, support groups are also a great place to ask for advice, find out about useful resources or vent frustrations. You will not have to worry about judgement or confusion from non-caregivers since everyone is going through similar struggles.

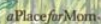
Being able to talk with others who truly understand what you are going through reduces stress, validates your emotions, and gives connection and support.

Excerpts from [You Are Not Alone - Man Enough](#) and [8 Benefits of Caregiver Support Groups – DailyCaring](#).

CAREGIVER TIP #140

"Have a support group outside the family, so that you can enjoy others' perspectives."

- Leanne O.

 aPlaceforMom

Some of the Numbers that Define Caregivers Today

As your family progresses through the various stages of life, chances that at some point in your life you will find yourself acting as a caregiver. You are not alone in this role. Here are some numbers that show just how many Americans act as family caregivers.

The number of caregivers

A caregiver is someone who provides care to another person who is elderly, ill or disabled. This caregiver may range from running errands and helping with grocery and laundry to full-time care of someone who is no longer capable of caring for him-or herself.



In 2015 a research report was released by the AARP Public Policy Institute and the National Alliance for Caregiving. The following figures from this research reported entitled *Caregiver in the U.S. 2015*:

- Almost 45 million American adults provided informal (unpaid) care in the 12 months prior to the survey.
- Almost 35 million American adults provided unpaid care to someone aged 50 years or more.
- Over half of caregivers are female (60%) but males are caregivers too (40%).
- The vast majority of caregivers (82%) are caring for a single individual.
- Another huge majority (85%) are caring for a relative.
- Nearly half are taking care of one of their own parents or a parent of a spouse.
- Ten percent take care of their own spouse.

Who are the caregivers?

The figures above show that they are relatives, in-laws and spouses. According to the *Caregiving in the U.S. 2015*, they are mature people, with the average age being 49 years. However, seven percent of them are over 75 years of age themselves.

An article by Renee Stepler from the Pew Research Center's Fact Tank shows that almost one fourth (23%) of Americans adults between the ages of 45 and 64 are caregivers to an aged person. Almost 20% of adults who

are themselves over 65 years of age care for someone else who is aged. About 30% are caring for their own spouses (29%) and a little higher percentage (33%) are helping a neighbor or friend.

Whom do they care for?

According to the Alzheimer's Association, in 2012 some 15 million of the caregivers – or almost one-fourth- are providing care for someone who is suffering from Alzheimer's or some other form of dementia.

The AARP and National Alliance for Caregiving report notes that the majority of recipients of caregiving have a long-term debilitating physical condition (59%). Some also have short-term debilitating conditions that require help. The Alzheimer Association's figure of about a fourth of care recipients having memory problems in some form is confirmed by *Caregiving in the U.S. 2015*. However, the *Caregiving* report notes that fewer than 10% of caregivers consider their care recipient's dementia or memory losses are the main reason the person needs care.

What do caregivers do?

Interestingly, both men and women provide more care in the form of "sweat equity" as opposed to providing personal care or financial support. According to a 2012 Gallup poll, the types of care most commonly provided are tasks such as running errands, helping out with repairs around the house and performing housework chores. In addition, 68% of caregivers provide emotional support to their elderly loved ones.

The AARP and National Alliance for Caregiver report of 2015, however, says that some six out of ten caregivers help their care recipient with at least one out of the six Activities of Daily Living.

What is caregivers' value?

In addition to the emotional and moral benefits of acting as a caregiver, a caregiver's services actually have substantial financial value. These services were valued \$470 billion in 2013, up from an estimated \$450 billion in 2019.

If voluntary caregivers were unable to do what they do, the elderly and infirm would be forced to pay for such services at a tremendous personal and social cost.

Conclusion

Given that 29% of adults in the United States are acting as a caregiver in some capacity, it is quite likely that any given person will have this experience at least at some point during his or her lifetime. Knowing this can provide a source of comfort and encouragement, as caregivers realize that they are not alone.

Read the full article at [Family Caregiver Statistics: Some of the Numbers that Define Caregivers Today - Seniors Matter](#).

Activities of Daily Living (ADLs)

ADLs is a term used to collectively describe fundamental skills that are required to independently care for oneself such as eating, bathing, and mobility.

Getting in and out of beds and chairs
Dressing
Toileting
Bathing or showering
Feeding
Coping with incontinence

Caregiver Self-Care Activities

1. **Open a Window and Let the Outside In** – Spending time in the great outdoors is a free and very effective way of releasing and managing stress. Pro tip: Leave your cell phone inside.



2. **Mindfulness Glitter Jar** – A glitter jar is a visual metaphor for all the negative thoughts and feelings racing through your mind.

3. **Practice Breath Awareness for 10 Minutes** – One of the simplest deep relaxation techniques is breath awareness.



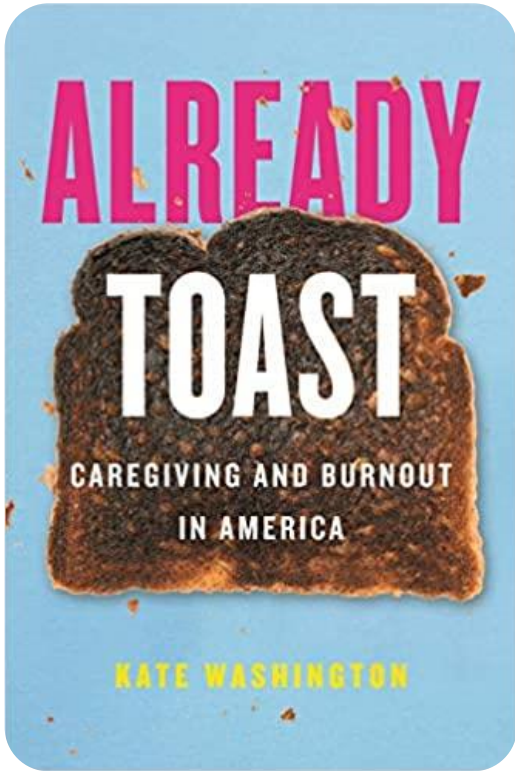
4. **Journaling** – Journaling is a creative and therapeutic activity that you can do for yourself anywhere, anytime. You can explore your innermost thoughts, feelings, and experiences.

5. **Treat Yourself to Dinner** – Whether you are eating alone or with a guest, treating your meal as a special event can bring moments of comfort and pleasure. Treat yourself to taking some time today by making your mealtime an event.



VA Caregiver Support has created a [caregiver self-care activity book](#) with descriptions of these activities and additional activities.

Books of the Month



Already Toast shows how all-consuming caregiving can be, how difficult it is to find support and how the social and literary narratives that have long locked women into providing emotional labor also keep them in unpaid caregiving roles.

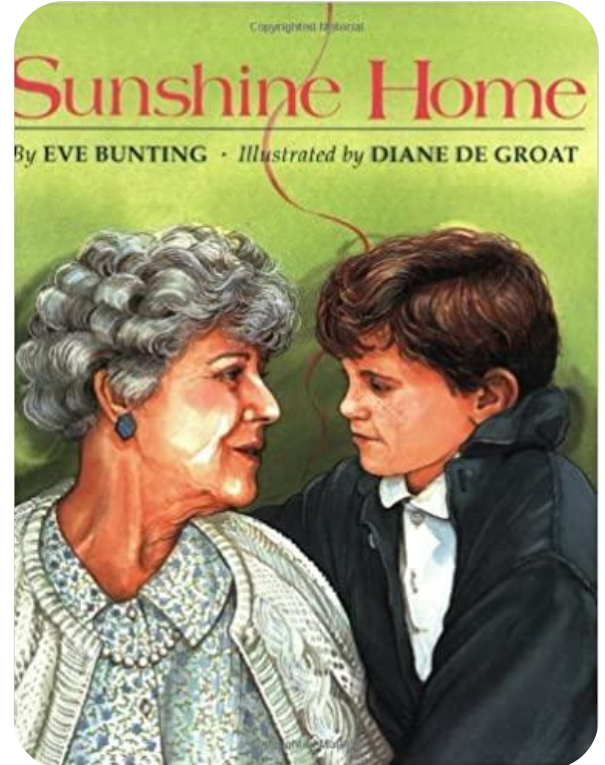
By: Kate Washington



This is the perfect story for anyone planning a nursing home visit. The author's perceptive, dignified and heart-warming portrayal of one family facing the challenges of aging.

Reading Age: 4 to 7 years

Print Length: 32 pages



FAMILY CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUP

The Caregiver Support Group is a monthly group that offers a safe place to discuss the stresses, challenges and rewards of providing care for an aging loved one. The meetings will be held virtually for the foreseeable future from noon to 1 p.m.

August's session will be held on Thursday, August 12, 2021, from noon to 1 p.m. Please RSVP (stacey.l.bonner@vanderbilt.edu) for Zoom details by Wednesday, August 11.



LUNCHTIME SESSION

The Lunchtime Session is a monthly educational session to receive valuable information while providing care to your loved one.

This month, Mary Ross-Tarkington, with Elder Veterans Legal Aid Group, P.C. will inform you of the resources available to veterans.

Mary Ross-Tarkington will discuss the Aid & Attendance benefit, eligibility requirements, pension rates, and how to apply.

August's lunchtime session will be held on Wednesday, August 18, 2021, from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. Please RSVP (stacey.l.bonner@vanderbilt.edu) for Zoom details by Tuesday, August 17.



“There are only four kinds of people in the world. Those who have been caregivers. Those who are currently caregivers. Those who will be caregivers, and those who need a caregiver.”

-Rosalyn Carter