

Boomers, Elders, and More E-Newsletter

2140 Belcourt Avenue
Nashville, TN 37212

<http://vanderbilt.edu/child-family-center/>

Message from the Coordinator

As the summer ends, many of you have made trips to visit your aging loved one. Since the last visit, you may have noticed changes with your loved one causing uncertainty of what to do next.

Being a local or long-distance caregiver can be challenging, but the Family Resource Center is here to assist you with that role. The center provides resources through lunchtime sessions, caregiver support group, individual one-on-one consultation, and an annual elder care fair. The resources the family services coordinator can help you navigate can be local or out-of-state.

The Family Resource Center is here to help you by answering questions and helping you find appropriate resources and services that will save you time, energy, and money.

Call or email Stacey Bonner anytime for support and information at 615-936-1990 or stacey.l.bonner@vanderbilt.edu.

News Highlight

Memory Loss: Normal or a Sign of Trouble?

Everyone experiences some forgetfulness, but the FDA explains when to be concerned
By: Robert Preidt

Mild memory lapses such as forgetting where you put your keys or reading glasses, though worrisome, are normal, experts say.

But certain memory problems - - such as putting your car keys in the fridge - - may indicate a more serious issue.

So, what kind of memory issue suggests the need for a medical assessment? Some examples include: memory loss that disrupts daily activities such as balancing a checkbook, maintaining personal hygiene and driving; or frequent memory lapses such as regularly forgetting appointments or where you parked your car, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) said in a news release.

Other warning signs include forgetting whole conversations, forgetting the names of relatives or close friends, frequently repeating yourself, or asking the same questions in the same conversation.

Another red flag is memory loss that's getting worse over time.

There are a number of things you can do that might help reduce the risk of developing memory problems: keeping cholesterol and blood pressure levels low; not smoking and not drinking too much alcohol; eating a healthy diet; engaging in lots of social activity; and keeping your brain active by reading, writing, learning a new skill, playing games and gardening.

There are a number of causes of memory loss, including medications; heavy drinking; stress; depression; head injury; infections such as HIV, tuberculosis, syphilis and herpes; thyroid problems; lack of quality sleep; and low levels of vitamins B1 and B12. Many of these causes can be helped with medical treatment, the FDA noted.

"As part of the normal aging process, it can be harder for some people to recall some types of information, such as the names of individuals. Mild cognitive impairment, however, is a condition characterized by a memory deficit beyond that expected for age, but is not sufficient to impair day-to-day activities," according to the news release.

Dementia is the most serious form of memory loss. Dementia causes increasing memory troubles and problems with other aspects of thinking. These difficulties are severe enough to impair the ability to do daily activities.

Dementia has many causes, but the most common is Alzheimer's disease, researchers have found. Alzheimer's causes a progressive loss of brain cells that's accompanied by other abnormalities of the brain.

About 5 million people in the United States have some form of dementia, including Alzheimer's disease. That number is expected to nearly triple by 2050, according to research published in the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*.

Source: https://medlineplus.gov/news/fullstory_159654.html

Sibling Conflict

By Anna Walters, RN

(a director of a memory care unit in Illinois)

In times of stress, even the best of families have difficulty agreeing on what to do with Mom and Dad. But not many of us come from the best of families. Most of us come from normal families with lots of history, past disagreements, and maybe even feelings of resentment or bitterness. These issues make reaching an agreement on a very difficult situation almost impossible. Here are a few suggestions which may help make this easier.

The most important suggestion is also the most difficult. Good communication sounds easy enough; you and your siblings can talk this over. But are you really communicating? Truly helpful communication will not take place without an accepting environment. That means that everyone participating in this conversation must be willing to accept without judgment the statements made by others. This is the hard part. When your brother says he is too busy to help take care of Mom, it seems like a normal reaction to be upset. It seems perfectly reasonable to question his loyalty and commitment to your mother. The accusations begin to fly, your brother feels guilty and gets defensive. Communication ends and arguments begin.

This situation is repeated all over the nation in many families. What is your brother really saying to you? Do you really think he doesn't love your mother? Is he so obsessed with making money that he is not willing to cut back at work? Does he want to put Mom in a nursing home? Hasn't he heard all of the things that could happen there? She took care of us, why is he abandoning his family? What has happened to your brother?

Your brother on the other hand is thinking, Is my sister crazy? I don't have time for anything now and she wants me to take care of Mom? There are so many things going on in my life, there is no way I can do this. We just started a new project at work and my boss is expecting me to put in overtime to get it done. I can't drop the ball; I have been waiting for this chance for a long time. There are perfectly good professionals who would be better taking care of Mom. They are trained and know what to do in these situations. I have no idea what to do or where to even start.

There are two people here who both love their mother.

They both want to take good care of her. These two people have been raised by the same parents, in the same house, but can't agree on what to do. These two people have each had very different life experiences, and have two different opinions about what is the right thing to do in this situation. Your brother feels it would be wrong to try to take care of Mom if you don't know what you're doing. He has not been to a bad nursing home; he has not heard some of these horror stories. He does not feel he is abandoning his mother; he feels like this really is taking care of her in the best way.

You feel like nursing homes are horrible places where people go to wait to die. They have been abandoned by their families, who are too busy to take care of them. Because they feel so guilty about this decision, and the nursing home is such a horrible place to be, their families hate to visit. They come by less, make excuses, and before you know it, Mom dies in a nursing home alone, surrounded by mean strangers, full of bed sores, thin as a rail and you will never forgive yourself.

How does these two extreme opposites come to an agreement? The willingness to accept each other's opinions without judgment will open the environment to true and helpful communication. Hold the family meeting, including all siblings, spouses and children. If you are absolutely certain you want to bring Mom into your home, try it for thirty days. Create a list of what needs to be done. Maybe your brother cannot imagine helping his mother get dressed, but he can pick up her medications. He will not take time off work to take her to the doctor during the week, but he is willing to pay the neighbor's kid to mow her lawn.

By accepting each other's opinion, you can move onto what is possible. Focus on what each of you is willing to do to make this happen. All of the family should be involved in these decisions, and all concerns should be addressed in some fashion. Compromise on those issues you cannot agree on. Do things on a trial basis and determine how the family will evaluate if it is working. Hold another family meeting in 25 days and this time try to include Mom. Is she happy? Is anyone unhappy with the arrangements? What adjustments need to be made? Will this work long term?

Good communication is just the beginning of what your family is capable of. Good luck.

source: http://caregiver.com/articles/print/sibling_conflict_print.htm

*Repeat after me:
I am
stronger
than this challenge.
And this challenge
is making me even
stronger.*

from dumpaday.com

Upcoming Events

Social Security 101

Date: Thursday, August 18, 2016

Time: 12:30-1:30 p.m.

Location: Light Hall Room 202

Speaker: Robin Fountain, public affairs specialist,
Social Security Administration

Description: Learn the basics about Social Security programs and policies, including retiree and survivor benefits. Please feel free to bring your lunch.

Bill Zagorski of Centennial Adultcare Center will talk about the benefits of adult day health care, the different types of adult day and adult day health care, and why a family should consider using adult day services. A representative from Vanderbilt Human Resources will give an overview of the dependent day care flexible spending account and how it can benefit a family caregiver whose loved one is enrolled in an adult day program. September's boomers, elders, and more lunchtime session will be held Wednesday, September 7, 2016 from 12 p.m. to 1 p.m. in Light Hall Room 412. Please feel free to bring your lunch.

Vanderbilt Family Resource Center's Caregiver Support group will be held on Wednesday, September 14, 2016 from 12 p.m. to 1 p.m. in Medical Center East Room 8380A. The caregiver support group is a time to share information and openly discuss your problems without judgment, to process your feelings, and to hear others talk about their experiences.

If you need information or resources to assist you in your caregiving role, contact Stacey Bonner, Family Services Coordinator, at stacey.l.bonner@vanderbilt.edu or 936-1990.

