

Boomers, Elders, and More E-Newsletter

2140 Belcourt Avenue
Nashville, TN 37212

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

Message from the Coordinator

As the holidays approach, many spend this time with families and friends. Family caregivers may feel 'jolly' because the holidays are arriving, but overwhelmed and stressed due to the daily duties as a caregiver. During this time, a family caregiver envisions everything *has* to be perfect, right? Wrong!

Often times we get so caught up in worrying if things are going to be 'perfect' rather than actually enjoying the holiday. Instead of going all-out for the holiday, try simplifying things this year; like choosing fewer decorations, ask others to bring a dish to avoid long hours cooking and choose activities that will not require too much time. The holidays should be about spending time with loved ones, so use this time to cherish those sweet moments and enjoy your family.

Remember, do not aim for perfection, because, *simple is better!*

Upcoming Events

Robin Williams, Executive Director of SilverLink, LLC, will be talking about housing options for your loved. Many aging adults like to remain in their home as long as possible, but many times this is not an option. On Wednesday, December 6, 2017, Robin Williams will talk about the many factors that determine what housing option is appropriate for your loved and your family. This month's Boomers, Elders, and More Lunchtime Session will be held from noon to 1 p.m. in Light Hall Room 431.

Vanderbilt Family Resource Center's Caregiver Support group will be held on Wednesday, December 13, 2017 from noon to 1 p.m. in Light Hall Room 419C. 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.

Division of Administration

Child & Family Center



News Highlights

Fall Risks for Older Adults

By: Center for Disease and Control Prevention



According to a new CDC study published in the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR), an estimated 234,000 people ages 15 and older were treated in U.S. emergency departments (ED) in 2008 for injuries that occurred in bathrooms. Four out of 5 of these injuries were caused by falls—which can have especially serious consequences for older adults. Almost one-third (30 percent) of adults aged 65 and above who were injured in bathrooms were diagnosed with fractures. Among adults aged 85 and older, 38 percent were hospitalized as a result of their injuries.

Steps for Safety in the Bathroom

Certain home safety measures may reduce the risk for all household members of being injured in the bathroom. Some prevention strategies include:

- Adding non-slip surfaces and grab bars inside and outside the tub or shower to reduce slips and falls.
- Installing grab bars next to the toilet for added support, if needed

Preventing Falls Among Older Adults

Four out of five injuries that took place in bathrooms in 2008 were the result of falls. Falls can be especially dangerous for adults ages 65 and older.

Older adults can take steps to make falls less likely. If you are 65 or older, take the following steps to reduce your risk of falling:

Get some exercise: Lack of exercise can lead to weak legs, which increases the chance of falling. Exercise programs like Tai Chi can increase strength as well as improve balance, making falls less likely for aging adults.

Be mindful of medications: Some medicines—or combinations of medicines—can have side effects like dizziness or drowsiness. This can make falls more likely. Having a doctor or pharmacist review all your medications can help reduce the chance of risky side effects and drug interactions.

Keep your vision sharp: Poor vision can make it harder to get around safely. To help make sure you're seeing clearly, have your eyes checked every year and wear glasses or contact lenses with the right prescription strength.

Eliminate hazards at home: About half of all falls happen at home. A home safety check can help identify fall hazards, like clutter and poor lighting that should be removed or changed.

Source: <https://caregiver.com/articles/fall-risks-seniors/>

Loving on Empty: The Energy of Caregiving

By: Mike Verano

Through my practice as a psychotherapist and my role as a caregiver support group leader, I have met many people who describe an experience that I only recently have been able to name. This experience, which I witnessed first-hand as my wife and I found ourselves in supportive roles related to a chronic illness, has to do with two essential life forces operating at the same time.

I have named the experience *exhaustlessness*, being both exhausted and restless at the same time. I realize now that this is what I see on the faces of the caregivers who come to me for professional guidance. It is the look that says, "There's so much to do and so little time to do it that the only thing I can do is to keep moving." The physical manifestation is like taking a sleeping pill and an energy drink at the same time. The feeling of constant motion comes from the awareness that there always seems there is something else that can be done. The exhaustion comes from the exertion of, not just physical, but mental, emotional and spiritual energies.

In a purely physiological sense, this is a perfect storm; the collision of two powerful systems whose combined impact can feel like an emotional hurricane. The unleashing of this full-force gale of stress would, under different circumstances, leave one depleted and empty. Paradoxically, it also becomes the very fuel that gives one the wherewithal to make that trip to see the loved one despite eyes that are as heavy as the heart. It speeds up the thinking process that allows the multi-tasks of caregiving to be expertly juggled despite learning as you go. It fends off sleep as one sits bedside, ever watchful of a loved one's every move.

The reason that *exhaustlessness* does not come with the Surgeon General's warning of "Dangerous to health" is, I believe, due to the fact that it essentially arises out of a movement of profound love. Unrestricted caregiving runs the risk of burnout when the awareness of personal limits is ignored and exceeded. The heart-centered focus of *exhaustlessness*, on the other hand, provides a return on the investment of selfless compassion as the illusion of separation dissolves. The giver and receiver are one; we get what we give.

This is why it can be so hard to convince caregivers to slow down and why they often look sideways at anyone who tells them that they have to take care of themselves first. At a very deep level, the level where we are all connected, they are taking care of themselves as they move reflexively toward the needs of a loved one who is suffering. The well that feeds this force is unlimited, which is why many caregivers seem to perform miracles in their acts of service. It is the human body that has its limits and will, at times, need to drink from the same well.

To read more visit: <https://caregiver.com/articles/energy-of-caregiving/>



Tips & Tidbits

10 Ways to Keep Holiday Traditions Senior-Friendly

1. **Reconsider the menu.** If Mom can no longer handle preparing and cooking the traditional meal on her own, make it a group effort. It's a win-win: Mom can supervise and the next generation can learn all the secrets to making those favorite family recipes.
2. **Mix it up.** Older adults are usually most alert and at their best earlier in the day. Why not plan a holiday brunch rather than a lunch, or attend a daytime religious service instead of the evening one?
3. **Think simple.** You may love seeing the family home all decked out for the season, but hauling boxes of decorations may become impossible for seniors who struggle with mobility and balance issues. Get together with family and friends and decide which holiday decorating traditions to keep and what to forego.
4. **Be their eyes, hands and feet.** When arthritis prevents seniors from writing cards or macular degeneration damages eyesight and makes it difficult to shop for gifts, you can offer to take on those tasks. If time is short, suggest more efficient options such as online shopping and sending e-cards.
5. **Compensate when necessary.** If hearing impairment keeps Dad from enjoying the annual holiday movie, check out the latest sound enhancement technology. If Mom is having trouble seeing the deck of playing cards, look for large print cards or activities that can help keep her in the game.
6. **Hit the road.** You no doubt remember it as a child – those holiday light tours that you and your parents loved. A holiday driving tour is an easy way to bring back the memories and joy to an older adult who can no longer decorate.
7. **Go Skype.** Distance can separate older adults from loved ones, which exacerbates loneliness, isolation and depression during the holidays. Use the latest technology to help an older adult stay connected to loved ones from afar.
8. **Relive memorable moments.** Seniors with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias will especially appreciate opportunities to tap into old memories. Listen to favorite carols and ask your loved one to share his or her most vivid memories, like taking a horse-drawn sleigh ride or hunting game for the holiday meal.
9. **Make new memories.** Sometimes, things must change. If an older adult can't participate in the holiday or is hospitalized, why not create a simple video that shares highlights of the season? Or arrange to have a group sing carols to your senior loved one – traditional songs from his or her generation.
10. **Get help – fast!** One of the best ways to adapt holiday activities is to ask for help. Enlisting the help of a professional caregiver to help with meal preparation or to provide transportation for your loved one can lighten the load for families and free them up to maximize special holiday time with their senior loved one.



Source: <https://www.caregiverstress.com/senior-activities/holidays/activities-traditions-for-elderly/>

Daily Reminder...



Source: Pinterest

If you need information or resources to assist you in your caregiving role, contact Denisha Morris, Family Services Coordinator, at denisha.m.morris@vanderbilt.edu or 615-322-8076