

Boomers, Elders, and More E-Newsletter

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

Message from the Coordinator

The fresh start of a new year brings the promise of getting back on track, especially if you feel your life has derailed or is heading in the wrong direction. As a family caregiver, you are at risk of your caregiving responsibilities overtaking your personal life, leaving you in compromised situations. It is important as a family caregiver to care for yourself.

January is the perfect time to exhale and give yourself permission to invest in your own well-being for 2016. Joining a support group, getting enough restful sleep, maintaining a balanced diet, and relaxing in creative ways that reinvigorate and reenergize you are some ways you can invest in your well-being.

Today is the day to take a personal inventory of your well-being. It is your time to seize the moment and the year. It is your time to take back your well-being and move forward as an effective family caregiver. You are worth it and so is your loved one.

News Highlight

Putting people at the heart of health care, research advances definition of person-centered care

Putting people at the center of their own health care may seem intuitive, but it is an approach that is not widely practiced in the medical community. An interprofessional panel of eldercare experts convened by the American Geriatrics Society (AGS), in collaboration with the University of Southern California (USC) and with support from The SCAN Foundation, released findings from a research project to better define 'person-centered care' and its key elements. This innovative approach to health care puts individual values and preferences at the heart of care decisions, measuring success by attention to people's health and life goals. Research findings, an expert panel statement, and a special commentary published in the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* add clarity to the characteristics of person-centered care, which has lacked a cohesive definition even as its prominence in research and health policy is growing.



"For too long, our medical system has focused on treatment of illnesses rather than on care of a person with illnesses," explained project Principal Investigator Laura Mosqueda, MD, FAAFP, AGSF, Chair, Department of Family Medicine, Professor of Family Medicine and Gerontology, Keck School of Medicine of USC. "The values

espoused in person-centered care remind us of the importance of eliciting and acting on our patients' preferences and goals. We now have a clearer vision of how to translate the aspiration of person-centered care into a reality."

"Person-centered care is essential for older adults and chronic health conditions and functional limitations who need well-coordinated, team-based care. This concept shifts the success vision of health care on the things that matter most to people—how they are living every day with complex needs and achieving their personal goals. Person-centered care defines quality and value beyond technical measures of care toward dignity, respect of personal choices, and life outcomes achieved" added Bruce A. Chernof, MD, FACP, President and Chief Executive Officer of The SCAN Foundation.

As outlined by the AGS expert panel, a person-centered approach begins by gathering specific information about a person's preferences in light of health circumstances, with input from family members and other caregivers if the person wishes. Added to a comprehensive health and functional assessment, this information is used to help a person shape and articulate his or her health and life goals. These goals are driven first and foremost by how a person wants to function and what he or she envisions for future well-being.

To arrive at its definition, the expert panel reviewed research conducted by Dr. Mosqueda; Alexis M. Coulourides Kogan, PhD, Keck School of Medicine of USC; and Kathleen Wilber, PhD, USC Davis School of Gerontology, including a comprehensive literature review supplemented by interviews with leaders of community-based healthcare and social service organizations that reported providing person-centered care for older adults. From this work, researchers observed that:

- Organizations often define and operationalize person-centered care in unique ways. For some, it is focused on creating "individualized plans" to meet client and family needs. For others, it reflects the belief that person-centered care is "not just a program but a culture...embedded in practice and mission-driven."

- Even in light of their differences, organizations employing person-centered care remain strongly committed to the approach in more than just words. It requires, as several interviewees noted, significant time and resources, but the effects extend across the health system: "Staff are able to build trust and a relationship with clients, clients get better, staff feel good about client outcomes," one respondent observed.

"This research will help healthcare professionals and older adults understand both how and why success entails fidelity to certain key elements of person-centered approaches," noted Steven R. Counsell, MD, AGSF, AGS President. "The findings highlighted in the four companion papers—the literature review on person-centered care, report on qualitative research findings, expert panel statement defining person-centered care and its essential elements, and special commentary by The SCAN Foundation—help to advance person-centered care as a field. We're confident this work will help health systems and providers implement person-centered practices with the goal of improving care quality for all, especially older adults with complex health needs."

The Caregiver's Balancing Act

by Kristine Dwyer, LSW (caregiver consultant)

In the 1960s, TV celebrity Ed Sullivan featured a Chinese talent artist who demonstrated the careful balance and timing of spinning porcelain plates atop thin, wooden sticks. The key was to start spinning a stack of plates one at a time and then dash from plate to plate keeping each one in motion to prevent them from crashing to the floor. Viewers watched in amazement as plates slowed their pace and began to wobble precariously, yet miraculously the man was able to reach each plate at the last second just before it tipped. The artist then ended the performance by quickly gathering up each teetering plate into a neat pile without a single disaster.

Caregiving today can often be compared to this entertaining yet realistic experience. Balancing the multiple roles and responsibilities of our lives is a constant challenge. Each plate may represent a different part of our lives as we work tirelessly to maintain motion and balance. They can symbolize personal needs, marriage, family, career, friendships, health issues, finances, social and physical activities. These are the “plates” of everyday life that one can expect to spin. Then when one becomes a caregiver, several more plates are added such as personal and medical care, transportation, supervision of safety needs, emotional support, companionship, financial oversight and decision-making for the well being of a loved one. Add in the weight of a few unexpected events such as sudden illness, job loss, or a divorce and it can be very difficult to keep all of the plates spinning in unison without a calamity.

Although we want to avoid losing our momentum, a sudden crash of a plate or an unexpected personal emergency can be a time of awakening. It can also be a call to reprioritize as we evaluate the results of a fallen plate. One may ask, “Should I keep spinning these plates alone or ask for help?” “Should I remove a plate before it falls, or perhaps set one or two aside to focus on fewer plates for awhile?” Keeping an eye on our spinning plates is important to assess our capabilities and the challenges we are facing. If we live in a continuous scramble between the plates, we may lose our focus on what is truly important and jeopardize our own health and safety, not to mention the well being of those we care about.

Caregiving for a loved one may last for months or many years. In addition, the number of plates may change or be replaced as life unfolds and we strive for a healthy balance. Whether you decide to keep all of the plates spinning at once or set a few aside, caregiving support can be received in many ways: attend a support group or personal counseling sessions to gain a perspective of the caregiving situation, build a support network to include family, friends, medical personnel, or clergy and a social worker/care manager, accept assistance with personal care needs from family members and friends to lighten the load, hire private help even a few hours a week for household and chore services, accept respite care opportunities to allow a break from caregiving and find ways to renew one's own body, mind and spirit.

We may not all be as talented as the Chinese balance artist, but we can use our own inner resources and the help from others to attain steadiness in our lives. Providing care to someone in need may be one of the most important roles one will ever fill in a lifetime, yet it does not have to be done alone. The first step is to recognize that we are spinning too many plates or that the plates are teetering out of control. The second step is to ask for help. This is a sign of strength, not weakness, and is the surest way to keep all of the facets of our lives in careful balance.

Source: http://caregiver.com/articles/print/caregivers_balancing_act.htm



Caregiving Tips For The Best New Year!

By: Joan Lunden

Give yourself a health and wellness gift. Caregivers often neglect their own health, so make it a point to get that overdue medical checkup or book yourself a much deserved massage. If you feel that you're suffering from anxiety or depression -- find a therapist or join a support group. Taking care of your own personal health is the first step toward reducing any stress and strain of the year ahead.

Ask for help and be open to accepting it. Asking friends or family members for help is often the hardest thing to do. As caregivers, we often take on the role of hero, martyr or savior. Too often we have a "go it alone policy" and believe that we must take care of everything ourselves—You don't.

Sometimes a friend is all we need. Identify a supportive community of friends, families or spiritual gatherings. Engaging a friend for conversation, support or assistance is a wonderful approach to self-care. A safe sounding board can help alleviate stress. A good friend might even offer some respite time - - don't be afraid to ask - - it can lift your spirits.

Many caregivers are concerned they are seen as a burden and are often reluctant to come out and be connected to the world around them. Sometimes they feel no one cares. By finding a community outside the family, caregivers know they exist in a community of loving people who want to help because they care.

Family conferences are like tune-ups for the family car. This car needs to drive well, efficiently and for a long time. Schedule these conversations regularly before the wheels fall off. Understanding roles and responsibilities is extremely important to maintain a healthy family dynamic. Ongoing family conferences will help maintain necessary boundaries so that no one feels out of control or inadequate.

Keep a gratitude list in a journal filled with wonderful affirmations. Make gratitude your personal goal throughout the coming year. Exercising gratefulness lightens the load and shifts your focus away from darkness and worry. Gratitude empowers you to see the great abundance that there is in being alive. This process can inspire new avenues of thought and create a wonderful keepsake for you to treasure.

Find humor everywhere you go. Laughter is a great tension-releaser, pain reducer, breathing improver, and elevator of moods. Make sure you find your own laughter to keep smiling in your own life. Your energy for others will only happen when you energize and empower your own life force today.

Source: <http://www.joanlunden.com/category/3-caregiving/item/18-caregiving-tips-for-the-best-new-year>

Upcoming Events



Advancing frailty can contribute to injury and poor outcomes in older adults. Cathy Maxwell, an assistant professor with Vanderbilt School of Nursing, will discuss how frailty contributes to falls and how to recognize when an older adult is at high risk. Attendees will receive practical, hands-on tips to help prevent falls and injury in their loved ones. This month's Boomers, Elders, and More Luncheon session will be held on Wednesday, January 20, 2016 from 12 p.m. to 1 p.m. in Light Hall Room 419 A/B. Please feel free to bring your lunch.

DATE CHANGE: Vanderbilt Family Resource Center's Caregiver Support group will be held on Wednesday, February 3, 2016 from 12:00 p.m. to 12:45 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 journey, contact Stacey Bonner, Family Services Coordinator, at stacey.l.bonner@vanderbilt.edu or 936-1990.