

Boomers, Elders, & More E-Newsletter

A Monthly Elder Care Newsletter of the Vanderbilt Child & Family Center



A message from the Family Services Coordinator:

Summer has arrived and so has the heat and humidity! We encourage everyone to stay safe and cool during the hot weather. Older adults are particularly at risk for heat illness, and we urge all our family caregivers to be educated about this serious medical condition.

Remember the follow tips that can help you or someone you love battle the heat, sun and humidity, which are unavoidable throughout the summer months:

- Drink plenty of water. Drink one quart of water per hour. Don't wait until you get thirsty. Do not drink alcohol, coffee, or soft drinks.
- Wear light-weight/loose-fitting clothing. Include bandanna; UV-absorbent sunglasses; and a wide-brimmed hat or cap.
- Take frequent breaks. Five (5) minute breaks in the cool shade allows the body to recover more quickly from heat stress.
- Wear sunscreen. SPF 15 blocks at least 93% of UVB rays.
- Be mindful of medication side effects. Ask your health care provider or pharmacist if there are any adverse effects to being in the sun/heat while on prescription medication.

Wishing you have a safe and fun July 4th weekend!

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**QUESTIONS OR
COMMENTS?**



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IS A VACATION FOR A CAREGIVER EVEN POSSIBLE? YES -- HERE'S YOUR NEW WAY TO 'TRAVEL'

by Forrest Brown | CNN

(CNN) — Three hospitals. Four rehab centers and nursing homes. And 24/7 private home care in between. That was my widowed mother's life -- and by extension my life -- in 2018 and spilling over into this year.

When a family member has an extended illness, there really aren't enough hours in the day for the necessities: putting in some hours on your job (if you're lucky enough to keep it like I've been), making sure your loved one is cared for adequately, keeping the bills paid, etc.

And time off for a vacation? That's not conceivable when a full night's sleep is a treasured luxury and your expenses outpace your income. Or is it?

'Take Care of Yourself'

You hear it a lot when your life becomes engulfed in a loved one's long-term medical crisis: "Be sure to take care of yourself." It's well-meaning, certainly true, easy to say -- and hard to do.

Vacations are one way we take care of ourselves. They are a chance to recharge and refresh. But when basics such as nutritious eating and adequate rest can be hard to come by because of a time or money squeeze, a traditional vacation is completely out of reach.

Every person's case will vary, but for me, a classic week at the beach or two weeks in Europe is simply not doable.

The situation's been hard. I'm tired. And I'm envious at times.

"Despite these limitations, I have managed to find a way to "travel".



My travels? I drive between Atlanta, where I work, and my home state of South Carolina where my mother is now in a skilled nursing facility and stable for the moment. It's about 200 miles each way, mostly down the same ol' Interstate 20. Not my idea of a good-times road trip.

Despite these limitations, I have managed to find a way to "travel." This method can work for others who find themselves unable to take a week at the beach or head overseas for whatever reasons that severely limit you in time or money.

The method is simple -- and free! You just have to change the way you think.

Redefining 'travel' and 'vacation'

Because of circumstances I couldn't change, I had to come up with new definitions and time frames for the words "travel" and "vacation." What used to be a week off is now a day off. What used to be a day off is now an hour off.

"Vacation" might mean one glorious day free of both caregiving and work duties. "Travel" might mean a five-mile, 30-minute detour that has nothing to do with my appointed tasks.

And what I've discovered is you can create some precious moments in these little dollops of time and limited place -- moments just as meaningful as you'll have on a big overseas trip.

That minor epiphany came to me one sunny, spring day as I walked along the banks of the Augusta Canal and Savannah River outside of Augusta, Georgia. I had a family member who could sit with my mother all afternoon. My plan was to nap for 90 minutes and then work. But the sun, the sky, the gentle breeze -- they were calling me and I couldn't resist. And I'm so glad I didn't.

My one-hour stroll along the canal and river felt as magical and memorable as rambles I've had along the Seine in Paris, the Thames in London and the St. Lawrence in Quebec City. And it was five miles from my motel and in a place where I once lived. That's when the light bulb started illuminating: This is how I can now "travel."





Find the beauty in your own backyard

I have self-imposed limits on how far I'm willing to be from my mother in the case of an emergency - roughly 200 miles. That puts points north and west out of Atlanta out of range for now. So where can I go? I'm still left with pretty much all of South Carolina, a decent chunk of Georgia and bits of North Carolina.

I'm fortunate. There's a lot to see within this part of the Southeast that's now my range. And it puts tourism heavyweights such as Savannah, Georgia, and Charleston, South Carolina, within striking distance, not to mention lesser-known places such as Congaree National Park, mountain towns and coastal villages.

A situation like this makes you find the beauty of your own backyard, so to speak. You gain a new appreciation for what's always been under your nose when most of the world is suddenly cut off to you.

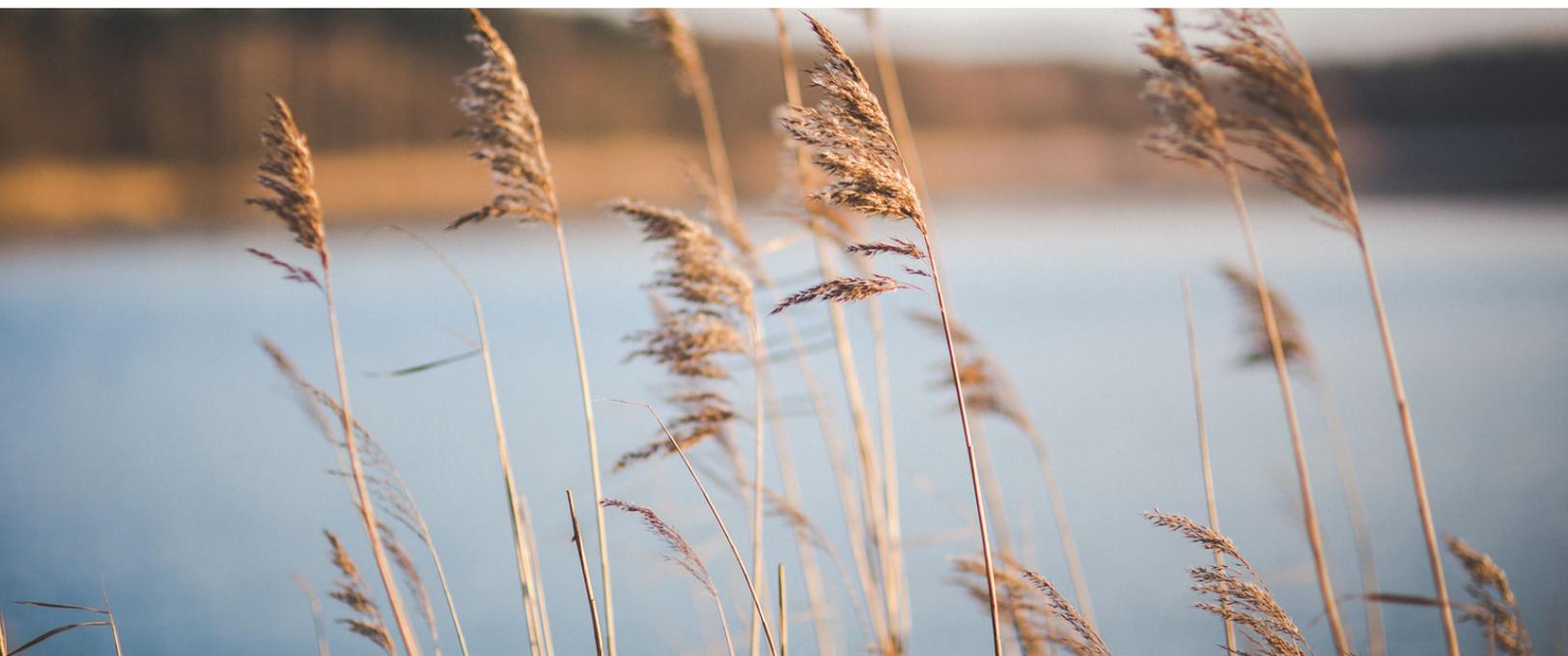
Some ideas on making this work for you

You may not be caring for an ailing family member. Perhaps you've lost your job and don't have money to spend on flights and room rentals. Perhaps you're working two or three jobs and don't have time to go far.

Despite your personal time, money or geographical limits, here are some other ideas on making the most of the situation and still getting in some quality "travel" time until things change:

- **Parks, parks and more parks:** Green spaces are nothing less than a salvation, and many are free. It can be a small space in a town or a big state park, which may have a small parking or entry fee. It's worth it. A chance to stretch your legs, breathe fresh air and soak in some nature is invaluable.
- **Community festivals:** A lot of these are also free (or cheap), and it's a great chance to get around some happy people.

- **Play tourist in your own city:** Pretend you have friends coming in from out of town. Where would you take them? That might be somewhere you'll want to go for yourself. I'm lucky -- Atlanta is geared toward visitors and filled with places I haven't seen yet even after more than 10 years of living here. But even a smaller city or a rural area should have some diversions you haven't gotten around to seeing.
- **Armchair travel:** This one might depend on your mood. But if you think it will lift your spirits to read about places far away, escape that way. For instance, CNN Travel has a wonderful destinations page of more than 50 places -- from Abu Dhabi to Vietnam. Click around and see what interests you. It's a great way to take a journey in your mind when you can't do it with your body.
- **Take photos:** These days, most of us have a phone equipped with a camera. Use it! In preparing the photo gallery that's atop this story, I came to realize my life has been more than hospital, rehab and lonely motel rooms in the past year and a half. Perusing your "vacations" is another way to take a mental break, plus you can share them with your loved one who is stuck inside all the time.
- **Use your money and personal connections:** If you're fortunate enough to have deep savings, by all means use that money. Hire someone to replace you some of the time if your particular circumstances allow.





THE SPECIAL CHALLENGES MEN FACE AS FAMILY CAREGIVERS

By: Liz Seegert

More and more guys are stepping into the role and discovering the emotional and physical toll



For Tony Tran, the biggest problem was the isolation and cultural pressure to keep it in the family. Barry Applebaum struggled with the stress and trying to remain stoic for his kids. Larry Bocchiere lost a sense of normalcy when he had to retire from his job.

What these men, and millions of others like them, have in common is family caregiving—providing ongoing help for an aging parent, a spouse who is ill, or both.

Although women still make up the majority of family caregivers, more and more men are stepping into the role: Some 40% of family caregivers are now men, according to the most recent research from AARP and the National Alliance for Caregiving, up from 33% a decade ago.

Like their female counterparts, these 16 million male family caregivers face tremendous challenges as they simultaneously try to balance work and raising a family with the physical and emotional demands of helping an ailing or aging loved one. But they're also dealing with issues unique to their gender—from sometimes being less familiar and comfortable with the more personal and intimate aspects of caregiving to fighting stereotypes about the nature of their role.

One upshot: Despite their large and growing numbers, male caregivers often feel invisible and ignored, says Christina Irving, a social worker with the Family Caregiver Alliance Bay Area Caregiver Resource Center.

That may be partly because they tend to distance themselves from the label. “Many men don’t self-identify as caregivers,” Irving says, “they just see themselves as the good husband, son or grandson.”

Here is a closer look at the experiences and challenges faced by the growing numbers of male family caregivers.

The son also rises: helping Mom and Dad

Nearly half of male family caregivers are helping an aging parent or in-law, making this by far the most common care scenario, according to the AARP study. And contrary to popular misconception, these men are not just lending an occasional hand: Some 63% of male caregivers are their loved one’s primary helper, the research shows.

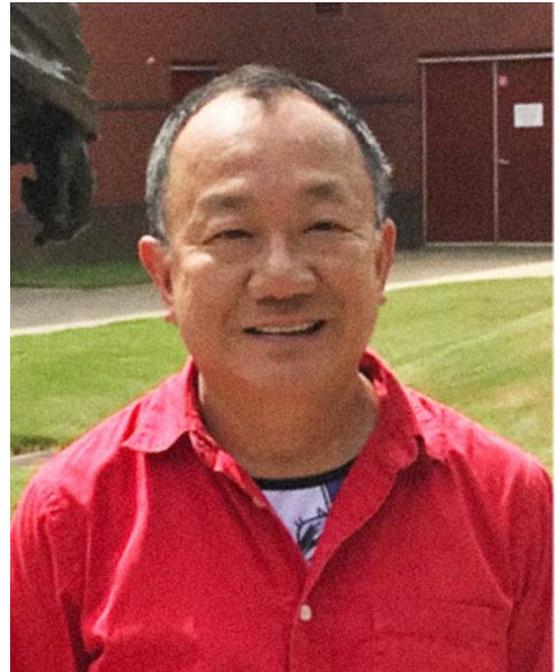
Count Tony Tran, 52, among them. Tran came to San Francisco with his family from Vietnam as a child. As the only one of his six siblings who is unmarried, the bulk of caregiving has fallen to him as his mother’s dementia has worsened.

“While she’s physically healthy, she needs 24-7 supervision because she wanders,” he says.

Tran took a three-month unpaid leave from his job to care for her full time. It wasn’t long before he was physically and emotionally exhausted. Even with community support services and some help from paid caregivers, it was still a struggle. He says he thought he could do it all, but never felt he was doing enough.

“Being a caregiver can be very lonely and isolating, especially being an Asian man,” he explains.

Cultural pressures and a tradition of filial duty make the situation even more stressful. No matter how hard it is, he says, you don’t ask for help. That’s why his new job is so important. Tran now works part-time with the Family Caregiver Alliance in the Bay area, doing outreach with their many Asian communities.



Taking on unfamiliar responsibilities

Men are taking on tasks that go well beyond stereotypical male roles of providing transportation, doing home repairs, and managing finances.

They're handling personal care—some 44% of male family caregivers help their loved one get in and out of bed or chairs; one in three assist with getting dressed and going to the bathroom; roughly a quarter help with eating, bathing, and showering, according to the AARP report. More than half are also providing medical and nursing help, including complex tasks like wound care, injections, or tube feeding.

“We’re managing medications, cooking, the whole nine yards,” says Jean Accius, vice president, independent living and long-term services at the AARP Public Policy Institute.

These activities take a significant toll on any caregiver, but men often find them especially difficult. “Men are less likely to have any previous background performing these activities,” Accius says.

“Men are less likely to ask for help and may be more reluctant to accept it, if offered.”

Carol Levine
United Hospital Fund

The research backs this up. More than half (54%) of the male caregivers in the AARP-National Alliance of Caregiving survey reported they found it difficult to help the people they are caring for with their personal, intimate needs.

Caregiving also affects men and women differently, according to Carol Levine, director of the families and health care project at the United Hospital Fund in New York.

“Men are less likely to ask for help and may be more reluctant to accept it, if offered,” she says. “They’ve been brought up to think they can do it all themselves, that asking for help is a sign of weakness.”

Husbands are especially challenged

That seems to be particularly true when the person men are caring for is their spouse. Although just over half of male family caregivers reported they had some help from other unpaid caregivers, more than three-quarters of those caring for a spouse did not.

Barry Applebaum, 60, has experienced both kinds of caregiving—and dealt with both in different ways.

He was raising five kids in a blended family in Lancaster, Pa. while juggling a job in sales, when he first began caring for his mother, who had multiple health problems. She lived with his family for four years after his dad died.

But eventually, her physical and mental health issues became too much to deal with, and he made the tough decision to place her in a long term care facility. “It was very stressful,” he says.

After his mother’s death, Applebaum thought his caregiving days were behind him. But just a few years later, his wife suffered a major stroke at age 50.

“At first, we were under the impression she would get better, but she’s never going to be who she was,” Applebaum says.



There is the emotional and physical strain of caring for his wife: “No one thinks at age 50 your wife is going to become a quadriplegic. She needed help with everything.”

And then there is the financial strain. Huge medical bills and other costs lowered their bank account.

“I changed jobs three times because I had to stay home and care for her—the insurance didn’t cover what she needed,” he says.

The two had been looking forward to becoming empty nesters, traveling and living life together. “All of our dreams were taken away from us,” he says.

“Can I do this for the next 30 years, do I want to?”

Barry Applebaum

Husband, father, son, caregiver

Issues of spousal caregiving are totally different than caring for a parent, he says. “My wife’s become my child,” he says. “I had to realize, I can’t rely on my kids, I can’t share with them everything I need to share. A lot of your friends eventually disappear. You’re really alone.”

Sometimes, he wonders. “Can I do this for the next 30 years, do I want to?” he asks. His kids encouraged him to talk to someone, and he eventually found the Well Spouse Association, a group he calls lifesaving.

“For me, it was about relating to people who were in my shoes,” he says. “This is the new normal.”

Work hours on top of care hours

Men and women also often face different challenges juggling caregiving and work. About two-thirds of male caregivers in the AARP survey were likely to work full time while caring for a loved one, compared with 55% of women. Most employed male caregivers worked 40 or more hours a week.

Unlike some European countries, there’s no national paid family leave in the United States. The Family and Medical Leave Act assures some employees time off to care for a sick parent or child without putting their job in jeopardy, but employers don’t have to pay you.

Only a handful of states—New York, California New Jersey, Rhode Island, Washington State and the District of Columbia—have a paid family leave policy. But many caregivers must use vacation and sick days, or cut back to part-time employment. Some quit their jobs all together.

The AARP survey found, for example, that 62% of male caregivers had to make changes in their jobs to accommodate their responsibilities for their loved one, including 15% who took a leave of absence or shifted from full-to part-time work and 6% who retired early or gave up working entirely.

Like trying to spear a mammoth

Larry Bocchiere falls into that last category. He chose to retire early from the U.S. Postal Service so that he could care for his late wife, who had emphysema, a progressive lung disease.

Now 67 and remarried in Bethel, Conn., Bocchiere looks back at his time as a caregiver. “The first few years weren’t too bad, but as she got sicker, her activity decreased,” he says. “I had to assume a lot of household duties and eventually help her bathe and even get to the bathroom. “ It wasn’t easy.



“A man looks at a problem and tries to fix it. It’s real easy to get frustrated when you can’t fix it.”

Larry Bocchiere

“You learn how to do these things because you have to,” he says.

How was it different for him as a man?

“A man looks at a problem and tries to fix it,” he says. “It’s real easy to get frustrated when you can’t fix it. That’s what happens with a chronic illness.”

As her condition worsened, Bocchiere left his job, giving up one of the few things that had kept him grounded.

“We started losing touch with our friends,” he says.

There were fewer people left to lean on, “which made it really hard,” he says. He had to learn how to give injections and manage a multitude of medications.

We used to take care of each other,” he says. “Then it became like trying to spear a mammoth.”

Their town had no services for caregivers like him. Bocchiere found a spousal support group about 20 miles away and “started learning how to keep myself sane.”

What caregivers of both sexes need

The more society can acknowledge caregiving, help people get information and destigmatize it, the sooner people can reach out for help and support, according to Irving. “It’s better for the caregiver and better for the person they’re caring for.”

Levine, author of several books on family caregiving, says caregivers need support, whoever and wherever they are. “I see this as a human responsibility, not a gender-related responsibility.” Her advice:

- Look for and accept as much help as you can get.
- If you’re not ready for a group, find someone to talk to—a sibling, a good friend, who will listen and offer helpful feedback.
- Contact your local Area Agency on Aging which can point you to community-based resources like support groups, respite care, or volunteers who can help with tasks at home.
- Take care of yourself first. You can’t do a good job for anyone if you’re overstressed and neglect your own health.



CAREGIVING TIPS & HACKS

Use Glow in the Dark Tape as a Guide at Night



GLOW IN THE DARK TAPE CAN BE USED AS A GUIDE FOR HALLWAYS,



LIGHT SWITCHES



THERMOSTATS



CAREGIVING TIPS & HACKS

Quick Bed Sheet Change



FITTED SHEET
WATERPROOF MATTRESS PAD

MAKE BED WITH 3 LAYERS OF FITTED SHEETS AND WATERPROOF MATTRESS PADS

3
DIY
CAREGIVING
TIPS & HACKS

CAREGIVING TIPS & HACKS

Easy Closet Organization



ORGANIZE YOUR LOVED ONE'S CLOTHES BY OUTFIT



PUT OTHER ITEMS (SOCKS, UNDERWEAR, ETC.) IN EASY-TO-REACH DRAWERS HIGH ENOUGH TO AVOID BENDING



Senior Perks

A list of senior discounts in the Nashville area

TENNESSEE STATE PARKS

Tennessee seniors age 62 and older, may receive a 25% discount on all standard camping fees during in-season and a 50% discount on all standard camping fees during off-season, a 10% discount on their stay at a state park inn and a 10% discount on their restaurant meal.

BELCOURT THEATER

\$8.50 movie tickets for Seniors 65+

CHEEKWOOD BOTANICAL GARDEN

\$18 Tickets for Seniors 65+

*\$10 discount on a standard level membership

NASHVILLE ZOO

\$14 Tickets for Seniors 65+

THE PARTHENON

\$4 for seniors age 62 and older, which is a \$2 savings

FRIST ART MUSEUM

\$10 tickets for Seniors age 65 and older. On the third Monday of each month, seniors receive an additional discount on gallery admission, plus discounted parking and 15% off gift shop items and café refreshments.