

March 2022

# *Boomers, Elders, & More E-Newsletter*

Monthly Elder Care Newsletter of the Vanderbilt Child & Family Center



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## **A Message from the Wellbeing Manager**

They say you can't pour from an empty cup, and that's true in the life of a caregiver. It's so important to find the balance and give yourself grace when feeling a little overwhelmed by life.

Life is too short not to enjoy it fully! A lot of caregivers put their own needs second because they don't want to let anyone down or cause problems. However, putting your needs first is healthy and important for keeping a balance within your own life.

If you don't hold on to anything else, remember - it is okay to let yourself off the hook if you need to - balance is key!

Setting boundaries may be hard for a caregiver who wants to do it all, but there is strength in balance. Because you are a caregiver, sometimes it can be easy for you to overdo things, but it is crucial to say "no" and set boundaries.

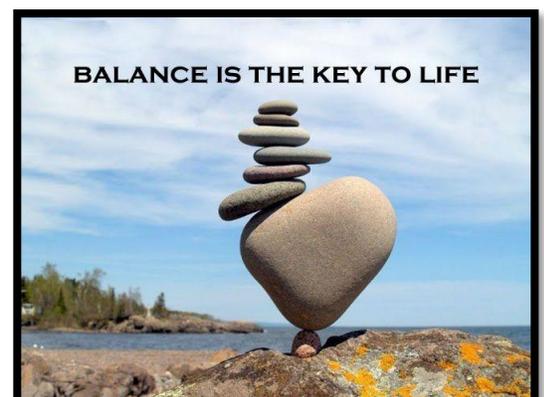
Becoming self-aware is up to you. A balance check-in with yourself looks like taking time on a regular basis to take stock of how balance might be eluding you. These check-ins can vary depending upon what works best for you; it may be through subconscious cues like feeling more tired than usual or physically taking note of symptoms like digestive issues, headaches and the like.

Balance is important because it is easy to lose yourself in the world of caregiving. Believe it or not, taking time for yourself helps your loved one.

Making sure that there is a balance between "you" and everyone else in your life will help with managing stress, burnout and tension that comes with your caregiver role.

Balance in life is essential. You may struggle some days but keep trying. By practicing and understanding the importance of balance, you will be on your way to filling up your cup.

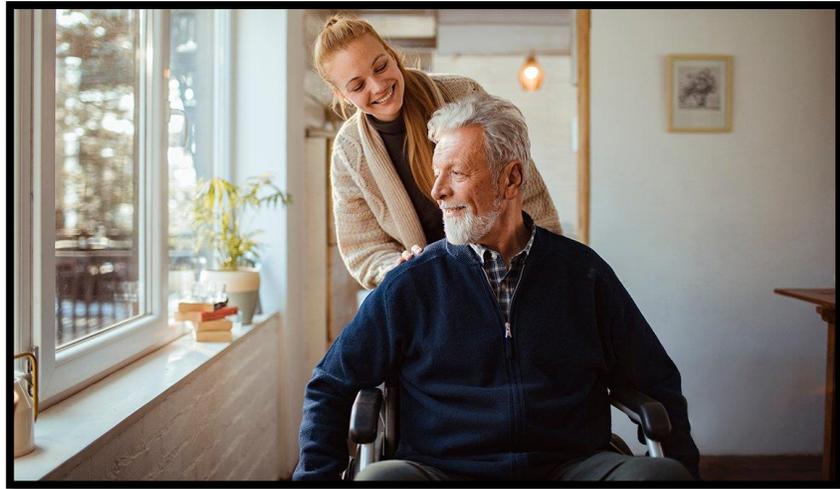
Excerpts from [Finding Balance in Life as a Caregiver | AlzheimersDisease.net](https://www.alzheimersdisease.net/finding-balance-in-life-as-a-caregiver)



# VA to Expand 3 Caregiving Programs by 2026

By Aaron Kassraie, AARP

More veterans will get aid to age in place, avoid nursing homes



The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has announced to expand three of its home- and community-based caregiving services to its 171 medical centers by the end of 2026.

“These evidence-based programs allow veterans to age in place, avoid or delay nursing home placement and choose the care environment that aligns most with their care needs, preferences and goals,” said Scottie Hartronft, a physician and the executive director of the VA’s Office of Geriatrics and Extended Care. “Veterans using these programs have experienced fewer hospitalizations and emergency department visits, reduced hospital and nursing home days, and fewer nursing home readmissions and inpatient complications.”

## Which three services are expanding?

Services are expanding to areas with the highest unmet needs and will include the addition of 58 medical foster homes, 70 veteran-directed care programs and 75 home-based primary care teams within these programs:

- [Home-Based Primary Care](#): This program is for service members who need in-home support for ongoing disease and illnesses that affect their daily lives. A VA physician oversees a team that provides health care services to veterans in their own homes. It is designed for veterans facing isolation and veterans whose caregivers need extra help.
- [Medical Foster Home](#): A trained caregiver provides services to a few people in a private home. Some, but not all, residents are veterans. The VA inspects and approves all Medical Foster Homes, which serve as alternatives to nursing homes.
- [Veteran-Directed Care](#): Veterans of any age may be eligible to receive personal care services for help with daily living activities such as bathing, dressing and preparing meals. Veterans are given a budget for services that are managed by service members themselves or their representatives.

## Why are these programs expanding?

Greater access to these programs allows for more in-home or smaller care settings, rather than traditional long-term care centers. More veterans have chosen these living arrangements during the pandemic to gain flexibility in care preferences and [reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission](#).

The VA forecasts that the number of veterans eligible for nursing home care is estimated to increase from approximately 2 million in 2019 to over 4 million by 2039.

Find the full article at [VA Extends 3 Caregiving Programs to All Medical Centers \(aarp.org\)](https://aarp.org/va-extends-3-caregiving-programs-to-all-medical-centers)

# Fearless Caregiver Manifesto

By: Gary Barg, Editor-in-Chief

Family caregivers need and deserve their own guiding set of principles, their own manifesto: The Fearless Caregiver Manifesto.



1. **I will fearlessly** assess my personal strengths and weaknesses, work diligently to bolster my weaknesses and to graciously recognize my strengths.
2. **I will fearlessly** make my voice be heard with regard to my loved ones care and be a strong ally to those professional caregivers committed to caring for my loved one and a fearless shield against those not committed to caring for my loved one.
3. **I will fearlessly** not sign or approve anything I do not understand and will steadfastly request the information I need until I am satisfied with the explanations.
4. **I will fearlessly** ensure that all the necessary documents are in place in order for my wishes and my loved ones wishes to be met in case of a medical emergency. These will include Durable Medical Powers of Attorney, Wills, Trusts and Living Wills.
5. **I will fearlessly** learn all I can about my loved one's healthcare needs and become an integral member of his or her medical care team.
6. **I will fearlessly** seek out other caregivers or care organizations and join an appropriate support group; I realize that there is strength in numbers and will not isolate myself from those who are also caring for their loved ones.
7. **I will fearlessly** care for my physical and emotional health as well as I care for my loved one's. I will recognize the signs of my own exhaustion and depression, and I will allow myself to take respite breaks and to care for myself on a regular basis.
8. **I will fearlessly** develop a personal support system of friends and family and remember that others also love my loved one and are willing to help if I let them know what they can do to support my caregiving.
9. **I will fearlessly** honor my loved one's wishes, as I know them to be, unless these wishes endanger their health or mine.
10. **I will fearlessly** acknowledge when providing appropriate care for my loved one becomes impossible either because of his or her condition or my own and seek other solutions for my loved one's caregiving needs.

## The Power of a Phone Call

### Overcoming Senior Loneliness

Loneliness amongst seniors is a serious health issue that has been exacerbated by COVID-19.

- One in three adults report that they are experiencing depression or anxiety during the pandemic.<sup>1</sup>
- This is up from one in ten who reported such problems prior to the pandemic.<sup>1</sup>

Researchers found that short, daily phone calls can help reduce loneliness, depression and anxiety.<sup>2</sup>



### A PHONE CALL A DAY KEEPS THE BLUES AWAY!

Encourage family members to call their elderly loved ones regularly. Try these conversation starters to meaningfully engage with your loved one....

1. What is something that you always wanted but did not receive when you were younger?
2. What was your house like as a child?
3. What was your favorite subject in school?
4. What is the most important lesson that your parents taught you?
5. What did you and your friends do for fun when you were young? Who was your best friend?
6. Did you receive an allowance? How much was it and how did you spend your money?
7. What was your first job?
8. What is your favorite city to visit?
9. What is your earliest memory?
10. What makes you happy?

Tennessee Commission on Aging & Disability (TCAD) Telephone Reassurance Program recognizes that older adults and caregivers are facing many hardships due to COVID-19. TCAD wants to show you care through conversation and make sure your needs are met during this very difficult time. Each week, a volunteer can call and check on you or a loved one. During these calls, TCAD will check-in, assess your needs, and see if there is any way we can better assist you. At minimum, the volunteers will conduct one call a week, but you can request more, if needed. If you would like to be added to their telephone reassurance registry, please [complete](#) the registration form.

<sup>1</sup> Panchal K, Kamal R, Cox C, et al. "The Implications of COVID-19 for Mental Health and Substance Use." Kaiser Family Foundation. February 10, 2021.

<sup>2</sup> Kahlon M, Aksan N, Aubrey Ret al. "Effect of layperson-delivered, empathy focused program of telephone calls on loneliness, depression, and anxiety among adults during the COVID-19 pandemic." JAMA Psychiatry. 2021. Doi:10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2021.0113.

## 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.

March's session will be held on Thursday, March 10, 2022, from noon to 1 p.m. Please RSVP ([stacey.l.bonner@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:stacey.l.bonner@vanderbilt.edu)) for Zoom details by Wednesday, March 9, 2022.



## LEARNING SESSION

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

This month, Amy Walters, Care Manager with Senior Helpers, will speak on Sundowning. Amy will explain sundowning, who does it affect, common behaviors, causes and care strategies.

March's learning session will be held on Wednesday, March 9, 2022, from 1:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. Please RSVP ([stacey.l.bonner@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:stacey.l.bonner@vanderbilt.edu)) for Zoom details by Tuesday, March 8, 2022.



*“It is so important as a caregiver not to become so enmeshed in the role that you lose yourself. It’s neither good for you nor your loved one.”*

*– Dana Reeve*