

# Boomers, Elders, and More E-Newsletter

## May 2018

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<https://www.vanderbilt.edu/child-family-center/>

### **Spring Cleaning: How to Refresh Your Caregiving Routine**

By: Carol Bradley Bursack (consultant and speaker)

It's human tendency to get stuck in our ways as we carry out life's demands, and caregiving is no exception. But the routines that we fall into could often use some improvements as time passes and new factors arise. With spring upon us, it's a good time to take a fresh look at our care plans to see if there are areas that need fixing or at least a fresh twist.

#### **Analyzing Your Care Plan**

Making pro/con lists of what is working and what is not is an effective method of examining any goal, from budgeting to weight loss. It can be just as effective for honing one's care plan.

#### **Reflect on Your Lists**

Once you have made your lists, it's important to take time to reflect on them. You have likely worked hard to get to this place in your life and you deserve credit for all that you've done. It's important to acknowledge everything you've done right. Caregiving takes a great deal of research, patience, effort, time and trial and error. You've made big strides even though it may seem overwhelming at times. Never shy away from giving yourself a pat on the back.

The next step is to analyze your list of caregiving problems and setbacks to see if you can make changes that will improve your life and that of your loved one. Whether your problem list is big or small, do not be intimidated. It will take work, but the goal here is to find solutions to these issues one at a time. Doing this should relieve stress and simplify your life, not cause you to feel more burdened.

#### **Refreshing Your Own Care Plan**

Springtime is a perfect time to examine your routine and write out your lists. Maybe you'll only have one or two areas that could use improvement, or maybe you'll have a significant list of challenges to address. Creating a list may seem overwhelming, but it's crucial to think about your care plan from time to time to ensure you are meeting all needs (including your own), you are able to handle emerging changes, and to certify that your approach is still the most efficient one. Just remember to give yourself credit for your caregiving "wins" and allocate ample time when it comes to rectifying problems. If you take the time to develop a solid care plan now and revisit it every few months, your challenges list (and stress!) should begin to shrink.

Source: <https://www.agingcare.com/articles/refreshing-caregiving-routines-156108.htm>



# News Highlight

## Caregiver Health & Wellness

*familydoctor.org*



### Who is a caregiver?

A caregiver is someone who gives basic care to a person who has a chronic medical condition. A chronic condition is an illness that lasts for a long time or doesn't go away. The caregiver helps the person with tasks such as preparing and eating food, taking medicine, bathing, and dressing.

### As a caregiver, am I at risk for health problems?

Yes. Because being a caregiver is so hard, your health may suffer. You may feel stressed or overwhelmed by being a caregiver. You may find that you spend much of your time caring for others, but neglect your own health. Because being a caregiver can also cause financial stress, you may avoid going to the doctor so you don't have to pay for visits or treatments. All of these things can affect your emotional, mental, and physical health.

### What health problems am I at risk for?

Studies show that caregivers have an increased risk for the following health problems:

- Alcohol, tobacco, and drug abuse
- Anxiety disorders
- Diabetes
- Heart disease, such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and heart attack
- Obesity
- Pain, such as muscle or joint pain and headaches
- Stress and depression

### As a caregiver, what can I do to take care of my health?

**Make wellness a priority.** You may feel like you have to “do it all,” regardless of the toll it takes on you. However, you can't take care of others if you don't take care of yourself. Take time out of your day to:

- Eat a balanced diet – this may be easier than you think because you may be sharing meals with your loved one, who will also need to eat balanced, healthy meals.
- Get plenty of rest – if you're short on sleep, take naps when your loved one does.
- Exercise – thirty to 60 minutes of exercise 4 to 6 times a week can give you more energy, reduce stress, and improve your mood. If your loved one is up for it, you can walk or find another type of exercise to do together.

**Seek treatment.** If you think you might have a physical or emotional problem, be sure to see your family doctor as soon as possible. Your health and well-being are important.

**Visit your doctor for regular check-ups.** Even if you don't think you're sick, it's still important to see your doctor for regular check-ups. Your doctor can help you stay healthy by providing preventive services. These services help prevent disease and will help catch any medical conditions you do have early.

**Take a break from caregiving.** Accept that there is a limit to what you can do as a caregiver. Recognize when you feel overwhelmed or are physically unable to complete a task, and ask for help in caring for your loved one. Plan for times when you will need help by making a list of people who are willing to lend a hand. This list might include family members, friends, and temporary care workers. On your list, include phone numbers, the times people are available, and the tasks they feel most comfortable doing. Keep a copy of the list with you at all times in case you are away from home when you need to ask someone for help.

Caregiving is hard, and caregivers of chronically ill people often feel stress. They are "on call" 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. If you're caring for someone with mental problems like Alzheimer's disease it can be especially difficult. Support groups can help.

*Dept. of Health and Human Services Office on Women's Health*

## Calendar of Events

Vanderbilt Family Resource Center's Caregiver Support group will be held on Wednesday, May 9, 2018 from noon to 1 p.m. in Medical Center East, South Tower, Room 8380A. The caregiver support group is a time to share information and openly discuss your problems without judgments, to process your feelings, and to hear others talk about their expectations.

Caregiving can be challenging and can cause one to experience many emotions from anxiety to guilt. If you find yourself experiencing similar emotions, then join us on Wednesday, May 16, 2018, at noon, to hear Cristy Degregory, PhD, RN, and Gerontologist at Vanderbilt University School of Nursing. Her topic is: Many Emotions of a Caregiver. During her session she will cover the wide range of feelings that are associated with the caregiving role. Attendees will leave the session with a greater understanding of their own strengths as a caregiver and several new ideas to help deal with the everyday stresses of caregiving.

## Daily Reminder...

*If you find it in your heart to care for someone else,  
you will have succeeded.*

*~Maya Angelou*