

September 2022

Boomers, Elders, & More E-Newsletter

Monthly Elder Care Newsletter of the Vanderbilt Child & Family Center

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Child and Family Center

A Message from the Wellbeing Manager

For caregivers, the ability to “bounce back” from providing care day after day, dealing with stressors from caregiving itself, outside sources of stress in the environment and dealing with internal emotions is crucial. The opposite of bouncing back is caregiver stress and possibly burnout. It is, therefore, important for caregivers to incorporate some simple things in their daily lives that can fortify their resilience.

Any good caregiver needs to know when enough is enough and learn to say “No” when they need to. In other words, they need to set boundaries. Everyone has their limits, and once you cross them, you are in uncharted territory, and anything can happen.

A healthy tactic for developing resilience is to be forgiving of the individuals in your care. Harboring unforgiving feelings is a heavy burden and can take a toll on your physical and emotional wellbeing. It is far better to be in control of your feelings than for your feelings to be in control of you.

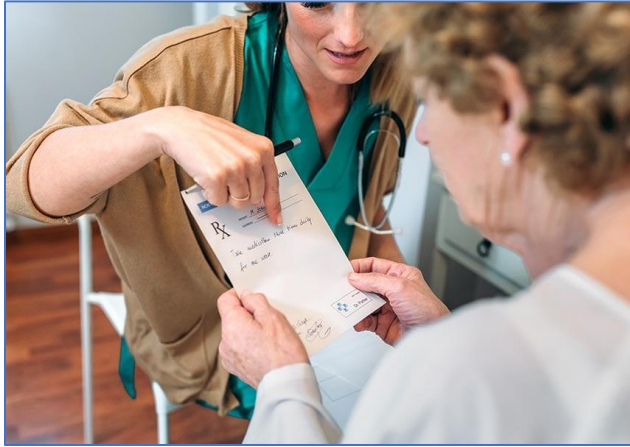
Lastly, it is important to listen to your thoughts and feel your emotions. Don't ignore them, they are trying to tell you something. The use of self-affirmations can help to keep you resilient in tough and stressful times.

Family caregiving is tough, and it can really take its toll on you physically, emotionally and socially. Possessing resilience is an important skill, as a family caregiver, because of the daily tasks, roles, duties and burdens you will experience.

Excerpts taken from: [Caregiver Resilience - Dr. Jim Collins \(drjimcollins.com\)](http://drjimcollins.com)



Managing Medications of Seniors



For most older adults, taking medication is essential for managing serious health conditions; however, medications can also cause harm, especially for seniors.

Research shows that the average older adult takes four or more prescription drugs each day, but almost 40% of seniors take five or more prescriptions a day. While each one was created to treat or manage a specific medical problem, each also comes with its own risks and side effects.

Polypharmacy

Polypharmacy occurs when a patient takes too many medications for their own good. Since older people metabolize drugs differently, the combined effects of numerous medications can be harmful. Overall, polypharmacy in the elderly is a major contributor to disability, frailty, falls, long-term care placement and decreased quality of life.

If you or a loved one takes multiple prescriptions, OTC medications, and/or supplements each day, you should be alert to potential side effects.

Yearly Medications Review

Depending on how frequently a senior's regimen changes, a medication review with your loved one's physician or pharmacist at least a year is advised.

Vik Rajan, M.D., present and founder of Houston Patient Advocacy, recommends asking these questions during a medication review with a doctor:

1. What medications is my loved one taking and why?
2. How necessary is each medication? Can any be removed or have dosages reduced?
3. Are any medications interacting with each other in a negative way?
4. Could these medications be causing additional symptoms or conditions?

Common Adverse Effects of Multiple Medications

- Tiredness, Sleepiness or decreased alertness
- Constipation, diarrhea or incontinence
- Loss of appetite
- Confusion (either continuous or episodic)
- Falls and other mobility issues
- Weakness
- Depression or general lack of interest
- Tremors
- Hallucinations (such as seeing or hearing things)
- Anxiety or excitability
- Dizziness
- Changes in sexual behavior
- Skin rashes

Full article from *Senior Helpers*

Talking to a Senior about Accepting Help!

Most seniors want to live as independently as possible and may have difficulty admitting they need help. While the decision might be clear to you, they may need some time to acknowledge the benefits from home care services.

Talking to a loved one about the possibility of needing help with activities of daily living, such as bathing, cooking, shopping or cleaning, is never easy. Be compassionate and empathetic and follow the tips below....

Be Direct – Try to avoid beating around the bush but speak with a respectful tone. You may know what’s best, but they may not be ready to admit they need help. Don’t take it personally.

- Take a list of your concerns and review them.
- Share your feelings about how safety concerns are affecting you.

Use Appropriate Assertiveness – The topics you discuss are likely going to be emotional. To help avoid defensiveness, use “I” statements to voice your concerns. For example, instead of saying, “You smell really bad,” say, “I’m concerned you are having difficulty getting in and out of the bathtub safely.” Focus on your feelings and specific concerns rather than their deficiencies.

Listen to Their Concerns – Everyone wants to be heard and feel like their feelings are valid. Allow the person to respond to your worries and concerns without being judgmental or blaming. Acknowledge that you hear and appreciate their feelings. Say things like, “I know you’re angry with me right now, but I feel confident we can work through this together.”

Provide Concrete Options – Provide options for resolving your concerns. Paint the picture of what help looks like and how it will benefit them. Be sure they know that they will be involved in the process. Remind them that you are a team with the same goal – their health and safety.

In-home care managers help guide you as you support your loved one’s desire to age in place. They coordinate with you to assist your senior with...

- ✓ Personal care: Bathing, Dressing, Toileting
- ✓ Light Housekeeping
- ✓ Medication Reminders
- ✓ Laundry & Changing Linens
- ✓ Meal Planning & Preparation
- ✓ Companionship

Full article from *Senior Helpers*

Some of the Best Self-Care Tips for Family Caregivers

Don't be Afraid to Ask for Help!

Please don't be a martyr; everyone needs help and support at specific points in their lives! Don't view this as some admission of being a "bad person." Feeling that you have to "go it alone" is a recipe for emotional and physical disaster. Instead, **ask for help from other family members, friends, your place of worship, your doctor, and last but not least, professional caregiver services.**

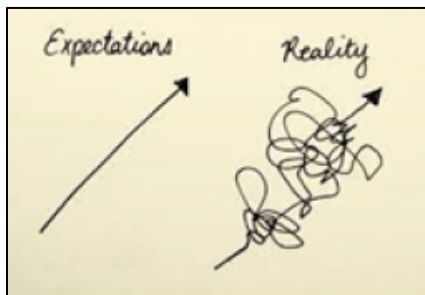


Getting Exercise, Eating Healthy, and Getting More Sleep

These are the "must haves" for taking care of your needs when under stress!



Getting seven to eight hours of sleep is ideal. Eat more fruits, veggies, and lean protein, and cut back on alcohol intake.



Don't Stress Yourself with Unrealistic Expectations:

Unrealistic expectations can set us up for failure on many levels. You can't afford to go on "guilt trips" about what you cannot reasonably do.

Be honest with yourself about your loved one's condition, your own ability to accept life's "new normal," and your ability to "handle everything" without personal burnout or stress.

Let Go of Unwarranted Guilt:

Stop beating yourself up for not being "perfect" – "perfect" in handling your emotions when worn out; "perfect" in the quality of care you feel that you always need to provide; "perfect" in handling everyone else's needs in addition to your own.

Instead, **be proactive in seeking help and resources for dealing with caregiving issues.**



Additional self-care tips can be located here [10 of the Best Self-Care Tips for Family Caregivers - \(balancedabundantliving.com\)](http://www.balancedabundantliving.com)

Put Down the "Baggage" of Unwarranted Guilt

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.



September's session will be held on Wednesday, September 7, 2022, from noon to 1 p.m. Please email Stacey Bonner (stacey.l.bonner@vanderbilt.edu) for Zoom details.

Learning Session

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

Two lunchtime sessions will be held this month:

September 13, 2022: 1p.m. – 2p.m.

Join Robin Fountain with Social Security Administration as she discusses Social Security 101 – Everything you wanted to know.

September 21, 2022: 1:30p.m. – 2:30p.m.

Join Lori Galbreath with Tennessee State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) as she helps you understand everything about Medicare.



Please email Stacey Bonner (stacey.l.bonner@vanderbilt.edu) for Zoom details.

“Some days there won’t be a song in your heart. Sing anyway.”

Emory Austin