Message from the Coordinator

Happy New Year!

The New Year is a great time to establish goals. After the hectic pace of the holidays, a New Year provides a welcome “fresh start” – a chance to adjust your habits and attitudes in ways that make you healthier and happier. As a caregiver, a New Year provides a chance to reflect on the joys and challenges of caregiving in the past year, and look for ways to make the experience more positive for both you and your loved one in the year ahead.

To help you on that journey, consider adopting one of the following as your New Year’s resolution.

- Focus on health, both mental and physical (e.g. exercise more, eat more healthy foods, set aside a few extra moments of silence a day, take an hour for yourself each week, read, enjoy a hot bath, or journal)
- Get more caregiver training—the more you know, the less stressful caregivers report their job to be
- Attend at least one caregiver support group to realize that you are not alone and that you can learn from others
- Use respite care at least once a month so that you may get a break and be refreshed
- Try to find a way to laugh or find humor in the day amidst sadness or discouragement
- Reach out to family and friends to help with your caregiving role so that the weight of your responsibility can be lifted and shared

By focusing on these resolutions, you will be able to reap the rewards of caregiving, maintain balance in your life, and provide care for a longer period of time for your loved one.
What’s Different About Family Caregiving Today?
By Lynn Feinberg (senior strategic policy adviser for the AARP Public Policy Institute)

This is a pivotal time. Converging sociodemographic trends and more complex care needs are contributing to historically unprecedented challenges in family care of older people in the U.S.

In sharp contrast, an estimated 84 percent of people born in 2010 will live to age 65 or older. In the past three decades, the population 90 years and older has nearly tripled. The majority of the very old have one or more disabilities and need supportive services.

There is no going back to the “old days” of family caregiving.
Historically, most care for older relatives was short term. It was an expected role of women, who typically did not work outside the home. Care was provided within the privacy of the extended family, all usually living nearby.

Today, families and care needs are changing at a dizzying pace.

The caregiving tasks we ask of families are more complex, overwhelming, costly and difficult to manage than ever. And the situation is urgent: A new study shows that boomers will drive up Alzheimer’s-related costs from $307 billion in 2010 to $1.5 trillion by 2050.

Although recent research shows that 90 percent of unpaid caregiving for people 65 and older currently is provided by family members, we face a growing care gap. Reliance on families to provide care in the way it was delivered in the past is unsustainable.

The modern family looks very different than our grandparents’ generation.
Never before have so many women, the traditional family caregivers, been in the paid labor force. Yet, unlike the old days, a woman’s “provider” role is no longer confined to staying home and taking care of families’ everyday living needs.

Today, two wage earners are needed in most households to support families economically and to ensure retirement security. Among 55 to 64 year-olds (the most common age group to take on eldercare responsibilities), older women’s labor force participation increased from 41 percent in 1980 to 59 percent in 2012—and is projected to reach 67 percent by 2020.

Several demographic shifts illustrate the dramatic changes in family composition, creating complex family structures for caregiving. The share of U.S. adults who have never married is at a historic high. About 1 in 5 (20 percent) adults (25 and older) have never been married is at a historic high. About 1 in 5 (20 percent) adults (25 and older) have never been married, up from 9 percent in 1960. Greater divorce among people 50 and older, and more remarriage (especially among older adults) may also affect patterns of family care in the future.

Public policies need to adjust to the realities of the changing American family.
Many experts believe that our nation’s lack of a comprehensive, coordinated and affordable long-term care system intensifies family caregivers’ insecurity. Working families are increasingly left on their own to fill greater care gaps.

New policies are needed for a better system of community-based long-term care and family support. Also needed is a larger and higher-quality paid workforce to provide supportive services and mechanisms to help families afford paid care.

Source: http://blog.aarp.org/2014/12/11/whats-different-about-family-caregiving-today/?cmp=NLC-RSS-DSO-CTRL-121914-P3_H2-365679&encparam=UmwiWIdJUXmqfwh6ETs4Yzu27nkgrmdCsh7ymh1w4BhIE=
The ABCs of Caregiving

By Maryanne Curran
(freelance writer and a professional family caregiver)

Throughout our lives, we each perform a variety of different roles. The one role you thought you would never assume is now the main focus of your life—caregiver.

If you are facing the new role of caregiver, here are some tips to help you succeed in your new position.

Ask. Admitting that you need help caring for your parent is hard. If you are the primary caregiver, ask other family members to contribute some time.

Banking. Visit the bank where your parent does his or her banking. Have your name added to their bank accounts so you may access funds if they are not able to. Be sure to check with a financial advisor about any tax consequences for you.

Community. There are many resources in your community. Identify them and use them. Neighbors, friends, and church members are often eager to help, but don’t know what’s needed.

Delegate. As a caregiver, you may think that you have to do everything. Delegate activities of lesser importance to others. It will give you more free time to deal with the important healthcare issues.

Emotions. Caregiving is an emotional ride. There will be days of anger, depression, loneliness, anxiety, and more. These feelings are normal given the circumstances. To balance the darker days, there will also be days of laughter, love, and joy. Relish these days.

Forgiveness. In the daily stress of caregiving, you’ll have your share of difficult days. Forgive yourself when you’re having a bad day. No one is perfect. Every sunrise marks a new day. Wipe the slate clean and start your day anew.

Government. There are a multitude of agencies that can be a great resource for caregivers.

Home Health Aides. A good home health aide can be a blessing. If using an agency, make sure they do a background check on new aides. Make a list of things you want the aides to do.

Insurance. Understand what medical insurance your parent has. Find out what benefits he/she is entitled to and what will be the out-of-pocket expenses.

Join. A support group is a place where you can share and vent. If you don’t have the time, there are many online groups. The group members know what you’re going through and can be a great sounding board.

Knowledge. They say that knowledge is power. This is never truer than when dealing with a health crisis. Learn as much as you can about the disease your loved one is facing. It will prepare you and teach you what symptoms to watch for. If it’s a progress illness, you can learn to identify the stages of the illness to assist with your caregiving.

Legal. Make sure all your parent’s legal documents are up-to-date. A will, power of attorney, and health care proxy are a must. Consult an attorney to prepare these documents.

Medications. You will need to become an expert about the various medications your parent is prescribed. Ask for a 90-day supply of medication. It’s often more cost-effective and will save you some trips to the pharmacy.

Nutrition. Illness can often change the eating habits of both the person who is ill and his or her caregiver. Make sure you both have healthy, nutritional meals during this journey.

Organize. If you were never an organized person, it’s a skill you’ll need to master quickly. As a caregiver, you’ll multitask more than you ever thought you could. The caregiving tasks may seem overwhelming. Just take one at a time and you’ll succeed.

Patience. They say that patience is a virtue. As a caregiver, this is a necessary attribute to your skill set. Everything you want to do will take more time than you think. Be patient.

Question. There are no dumb questions. Don’t be afraid to ask doctors, nurses, and other medical personnel any question you have about the health of your parent. Remember, they work for you.

Respite. If your family member is sick, they become the center of your family’s world. It’s vital that you find time for yourself and get a break from your role as a caregiver.

Spirituality. Connect to your spiritual side.

Talk. Talk about your feelings about being a caregiver to someone you trust. Talk to your loved one about their feelings about their health. Talking makes any relationship a closer and more loving one.

Understanding. As a caregiver, you’ll be called upon to provide a deep level of understanding to your loved one. You’ll need to evaluate each situation to determine what your parent needs. Are they looking for a shoulder to cry on? Are they in pain? Are they lonely? Is it something more? You’ll need to learn to understand the cues so you can help.

Visiting Nurses. Visiting nurses are the unsung heroes of the healthcare industry. They save you trips to the emergency room. They can treat and help diagnose a myriad of health problems. They can get through to a doctor immediately. If needed, they are a link to hospice.

Wishes. If your loved one is terminal, you must have “the talk” with them. It’s not easy, but it’s absolutely necessary. You must talk about what their final wishes are including funeral arrangements, do not resuscitate instructions or quality of life issues.

eXercise. Yes, we’re cheating with the spelling here, but it is the best example. We all know the benefits of exercise. As a caregiver, exercise is even more important. You ned to maintain your own health as well. Exercise manages stress.

You. While this is near the end of your list, YOU should be at the top. You, as a caregiver, will be facing a whole new world of challenges. That makes you a special and loving person. You are providing help to someone who desperately needs it. You rock!

Zeal. Like anything done well, it requires a commitment to the project. Caregiving is no different. Address your role as a caregiver with zeal. Be an advocate for your loved one.

Source: http://caregiver.com/articles/general/abcs_of_caregiving.htm?mc_cid=f5d6fb4799&mc_eid=22e8e31592
A Caregiver’s Treasure Book
By: Cyndie Goins Hoelscher

Caregiver,
in case someone hasn’t mentioned it,
you are a treasure—radiant, precious and rare.

You are,
bestowing your gifts in a time
when the world may not seem so bright or pretty.

You are treasured
as highly as the diamonds, rubies, and sapphires
precious gems in this world.

These jewels,
rarely recognized in their natural state,
are cut, faceted and polished,
until they sparkle for the whole world to admire.

Like these stones, caregivers shine.
And when the world may not seem so pretty.
remember this gift—a treasure box
to keep in your secret place,
so you will be reminded time and time again
of how priceless you truly are.


Upcoming Events
Kanah May, Geriatric Nurse Practitioner with Vanderbilt Senior Care and the Vanderbilt School of Nursing, will discuss dealing with difficult behaviors and sun-downing in the elderly. This discussion will provide the caregiver with information on how to address difficult behaviors and sun-downing in the person with varying stages of dementia. The session will include a brief explanation of behaviors, case studies/scenarios, and Q&A. The goal is to provide the caregiver with the tools to approach and handle these difficult behaviors. This month’s Boomers, Elders, and More Lunchtime Session will be held on Wednesday, January 21, 2015 from 12 p.m. to 1 p.m. in Light Hall Room 437. Please feel free to bring your lunch.

Vanderbilt Family Resource Center’s Caregiver Support group will be held on February 11, 2015 from 12 p.m. to 1:00 p.m. in Medical Center East Room 8349. 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.