



♡ You are not alone.
♡ You are not alone.

March 2021

VA EKHCS Caregiver Support Group

*Support and Education on Caring for Veterans
with a Mental Health or Dementia Diagnosis*

Struggling with caregiving?

7 Ways to Support Yourself as a caregiver during a pandemic



Here are some tips

1 Remind yourself of what you can control. Becoming clear about what you can and can't control will give you a sense of empowerment. It may be the route you take to the doctor's office, where you park, what you wear or when you eat. While these may seem like small things, remembering that you can make good choices will give you a sense of success. If needed, you can text yourself the list as a gentle reminder.

2 Identify what makes you feel better. Create a short list of items that make you feel better. Items on the list can include a song, a photograph, a prayer/mantra or a passage in a book. These are things that you can go to for a few seconds during the day. Even though it might only be for a few moments, it can help you pause. You're giving yourself a time-out. Creating these moments where you feel brighter can help your overall well-being.

3 Notice how you feel after sharing your story. Since most conversations are happening in a virtual world, this means you're texting or using your screen more than usual. This can be both beneficial and stressful. Repeating and providing updates can be painful at an emotional level. And while you may not notice it at the time, you may feel depleted later. So, if you find these types of conversations to be draining, find a few select people you can "go to" and share with others as needed.

4 Take very short breaks as often as possible. While it may not be feasible to leave the place where you are providing care, taking short breaks to focus on something else can help you gain a sense of control. You may even want to use your phone to set a timer as a reminder to pause.

5 Focus on your breath. When I was caring for my (now late) husband, I remember one moment shortly after I found out his cancer diagnosis was terminal where I ran into the hospital bathroom stall and realized the only physical thing (at that moment) I could control was my breath. As simple as it sounds, knowing I could control my breath was powerful. By slowing down my breath, it helped to calm my central nervous system, which benefited me both physically and emotionally.

6 Choose a favorite song to listen to, sing, or hum. Music impacts mood, and when we feel better, it can help to lower the intensity level of an anxious moment. The words you chose to repeat or listen to can bring about a smile and elevate your mood.

7 Seek help. Trying to do everything on your own can lead to frustration and create more stress. Help can come in various forms, from online professional guidance or a telephone call to a local pharmacy to a text from a friend. Since so many services are online, the ability to get a number of opinions has increased. For example, if you need help with groceries, don't be afraid to ask if someone knows of a reliable grocery delivery service. Or, if you need professional mental health services, online counseling services are now available.

Reminding yourself that it is okay to live in the needs of the day is also important. By giving yourself grace when things don't go as planned, you will be able to give yourself and your loved one the best possible chance for experiencing comfort.



CAREGIVER SUPPORT INFORMATION

Information from the NAMI website www.namikansas.org

NAMI, the National Alliance on Mental Illness, is the nation's largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to building better lives for the millions of Americans affected by mental illness.

Who We Are

What started as a small group of families gathered around a kitchen table in 1979 has blossomed into the nation's leading voice on mental health. Today, we are an alliance of more than 600 local affiliates who work in your community to raise awareness and provide support and education that was not previously available to those in need.

What We Do

NAMI works to educate, advocate, listen, and lead to improve the lives of people with mental illness and their loved ones.

Office: NAMI Kansas, 1801 SW Wanamaker Rd., Unit G6, Box 164, Topeka, KS 66604

Phone: (800)539-2660, **Email:** info@namikansas.org, **Website:** www.namikansas.org

Education Program Administrator: Sherrie Vaughn

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1-872-701-0185 ACCESS CODE: 589002177

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*Please let her know of any needs.
Remember to fill-out and return the forms we mail you.
We will make sure there are stamps on the return envelopes.*

LEC Cell Phone Number: (785) 250-4632

Mario Lopez ext. 52950 and/or Chardonnay Jones ext. 52951

Our availability is during office hours: 8am-4:30pm M-F.

Please call the LEC VA Cell Phone number (above) if immediate staff contact is needed during normal business hours.

If in a crisis after business hours, please contact:

Call 911 for emergencies
VA Emergency Room: ext. 54347
Veteran's Crisis Hotline: 1-800-273-8255, then press 1

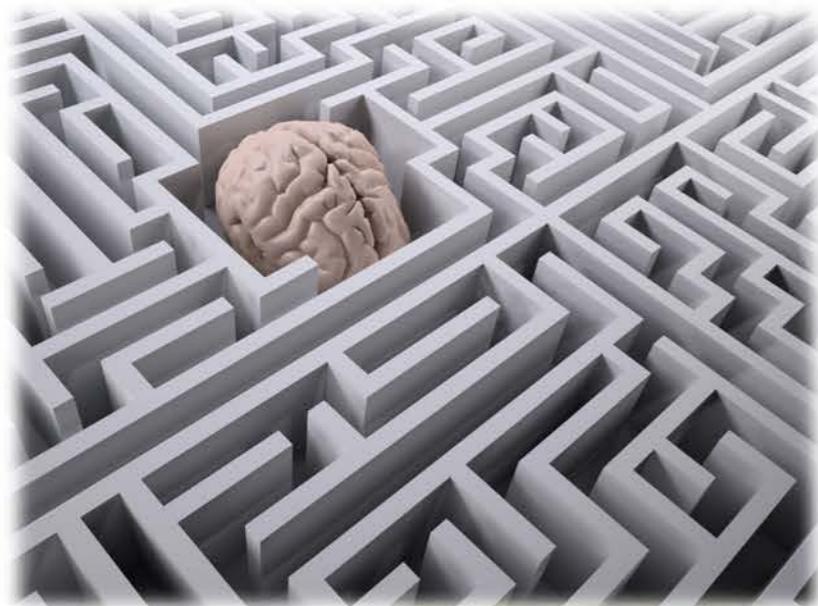


CAREGIVER SUPPORT INFORMATION

Programs Services Research Awareness

The Alzheimer's Association - Heart of America Chapter is the premier source of information and support for the 50,000 individuals and 200,000 family members and care partners living with dementia in our service area.

Through our bi-state network of offices, the Heart of America Chapter offers a broad range of programs and services, including a 24-hour Helpline (800.272.3900), at no cost to families.



We fund advancements in research to prevent, treat, and ultimately conquer this disease together with our volunteers who raise awareness of and advocate for the needs and rights of people with dementia.

Serving 65 counties in Kansas and Missouri

Northeast Kansas Regional Office
3625 SW 29th Street
Suite #102
Topeka, KS 66614
Phone: 785.271.1844
hdyoung@alz.org

Hayley Young
Outreach Specialist
hdyoung@alz.org



CAREGIVER SUPPORT INFORMATION

Multi-Modal Learning—Beyond the changing brain

Teepa Snow is a dementia-care education specialist with a background in occupational therapy and close to 40 years of clinical practice.

She has worked in a variety of settings with a variety of people. This has led her to be a pro on the approach of the behaviors and emotions associated with dementia. She does a special kind of experiential training called **multi-modal learning**. She helps people move passed many commonly held, though inaccurate, beliefs about dementia to create awareness of what is actually happening within a changing brain. She helps build knowledge so that everyone involved in support or care, as well as, people living with dementia understand the how and why behind changing behaviors, emotions, interactions, and reactions.

The goal is to help people build their skill sets and help understand that we must be willing to change, rather than try to get the person living with dementia to change back into the person they were before the condition started. The disease is changing them, so we change or we are not helpful.

You can find small nips of Teepa Snow's videos on YouTube. Just go to YouTube and type **Teepa Snow dementia 101**. You do not have to pay for a subscription to YouTube. Use the free version.

Her website is:

<https://teepasnow.com/resources/about-dementia/>



You can sign up for free newsletters and videos!



PASSIONATE CARE CURRICULUM

The Age-Friendly Health System and the 4 M's

The goal for the future is to educate the providers, the families and ourselves about the care of the aging population, not concentrate only on those with mental illness and dementia, but ourselves.

During the time Dr. Buenaver served our Veterans at the Topeka Campus, she became a leader in the Age-Friendly Health System movement. She received 2 recognitions for extending her work, not only with her Geriatric Psychiatry patients, but to the other Community Living Centers in Campus, and now to the Leavenworth campus.

What is the Age-Friendly System, you ask?

To focus the care on well being, assessment, education, and quick treatment by applying the 4 M's.



1. What **Matters** to the person.



2. **Movement:**

Assessing for fall risk and referring to Physical Therapy/Occupational Therapy as needed.



3. **Medications:**

Reviewing all those unnecessary medications and dangerous medications for the elderly.



4. **Mentation:**

Educating caregivers (paid and non paid) about early recognition of cognitive changes, delirium, depression, and further assessment and treatment.

What are we looking to accomplish?

- ◆ A more focused care of our aging Veterans.
- ◆ A family that can recognize signs when their family member is declining and to seek help early in the decline for a more successful improvement.
- ◆ A healthier aging population for the future.



Connection

- Who are the most important people in your life?
- How often are you able to see them?
- What kinds of activities do you do together?

Managing Health

- What do you hope your health care can do for you? What is more important to you — quality of life or living as long as possible?



- What kinds of actions are you able to do to take care of yourself?
- When taking care of yourself, what is most important to you now?
- What kinds of actions are you not able to do to take care of yourself?

Functioning

- Which activities do you find so important and enjoyable that you can't imagine living without them?
- What does a good day look like for you? What could you do before that you would like to do now?
- What do you do now that you'd like to be able to keep doing?

Enjoying Life

Caregivers to Vietnam-Era Veterans and Earlier *Now Eligible for VA Benefits*



Vets who served on or before May 7, 1975, are now eligible

by Aaron Kassraie, AARP,
Updated October 2, 2020

Caregivers of veterans who served during the Vietnam War and earlier are now eligible for a monthly payment provided by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

Previously, the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC) paid only family members and friends who provide care to those who were severely injured on or after Sept. 11, 2001. Under new regulations, caregivers of veterans who were severely injured in the line of duty on or before May 7, 1975, became eligible for the benefit on Oct. 1.

In October 2022, the program is scheduled to extend to veterans injured between May 7, 1975, and Sept. 10, 2001.

The bipartisan-supported Maintaining Internal Systems and Strengthening Integrated Outside Networks (MISSION) Act, which was signed into law in June 2018, prompted the benefit's expansion. When the law took effect in June 2019, caregivers were not able to access it because of problems with VA's information technology (IT) system. However, veterans were given additional private health care options, another piece of the legislation.

"AARP is pleased the VA issued this final rule, an important step in expanding the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers to covered veterans from all eras of military service and their family caregivers. More caregivers will benefit from the critical support this program provides," said Rhonda Richards, AARP senior legislative representative.



Final regulation expands benefits

The new version of the program broadens eligibility by expanding what is considered a "serious injury" to include illness and disease. Veterans are required to have a single or combined service-connected disability rating of 70 percent and require personal care for a minimum of six continuous months to qualify. Here are the detailed eligibility requirements.

Disability ratings are assigned by the VA based on the severity of an illness and how much it decreases a veteran's overall health and ability to function.

Monthly payments are set by a federal rate assigned to where a veteran lives. For example, a primary family caregiver of a veteran in Dallas who is unable to perform daily living activities or requires continuous supervision would receive approximately \$2,800 a month. If the veteran is able to perform daily living activities, the caregiver would receive about \$1,750 a month.

"The expanded regulation addresses the complexity and expense of keeping veterans at home with their families who provide personalized care," VA Secretary Robert Wilkie said. "This will allow our most vulnerable veterans to stay with their loved ones for as long as possible."





Extra money could keep more vets at home

For many families, accessing this caregiving benefit was a long time coming. And some advocates are not satisfied with its eligibility requirements and the time until veterans of all eras are eligible.

Additional Services Offered to Caregivers

Other new benefits offered through the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC) will include financial planning and legal services for the primary caregiver.

Caregivers also are eligible for the program's previous offerings, including:

- **Access to health care benefits** through the Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs (CHAMPVA)
- **Caregiver education** and training
- **Financial assistance**, lodging and travel expenses for a caregiver when traveling with the veteran to receive care
- **Mental health services** and counseling
- **A monthly stipend**
- **Up to 30 days of respite care** a year



If a veteran is ineligible for the PCAFC, the VA's Program of General Caregiver Support Services provides resources, education and support to veterans' caregivers. It is available for veterans of any era, regardless of illness or injury, who are enrolled for care in the Veterans Health Administration.

To learn more, contact the nearest caregiver support coordinator (CSC) or the department's Caregiver Support Line at 855-260-3274 (8 a.m. to 8 p.m. ET).

Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) “applauds the expansion of this long-overdue caregiver benefit,

which will enhance the quality of life for Vietnam veterans and their families,” said VVA National President John Rowan. “However, we are deeply dismayed that VA is requiring an eligibility rating of 70 percent or more service-connected disability as this will allow the VA to deny this benefit to the families of Vietnam veterans who have waited eight long years for this benefit.”



A VVA report found that more than 1,011 veterans died in 47 (out of 157) state veteran homes during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The group suggests home care may be a better choice.



“With the COVID-19 pandemic casting a cloud over nursing homes and congregate living facilities, the trust in institutional eldercare has been rocked to the core,” Rowan said. “Now the challenge for VA is to rethink the importance of strategic planning and oversight to ensure that all veterans will be able to choose a care setting that best meets their preferences and needs.”

ing to a Rand Corp. estimate.

Across the U.S., about 5.5 million family caregivers are assisting veterans; 80 percent of those veterans served before 9/11, accord-

“Research has shown that family caregivers can help disabled veterans delay or avoid the need for high-cost institutional care and, in certain situations, can actually help transition them out of those facilities,” said Joy Ilem, national legislative director for Disabled American Veterans (DAV). “Allowing severely disabled veterans to remain in their homes longer is economically smart and will more efficiently use VA and taxpayer funds, and often results in better health outcomes.”

Ilem said that before the VA's IT problems, Congress originally intended for the second phase of veterans to be granted eligibility in 2021, not 2022. “Their caregivers should not have to wait another year for these benefits due to VA's continued delays in certifying the IT system.”

“Their caregivers are getting older, and it's becoming more difficult for them to perform their caregiving duties,” Ilem added. “The need is only becoming greater for them as time marches on, and we know that our members who rely on caregivers have been anxiously awaiting the expansion of this program and will no doubt be among the first to submit applications when they finally become eligible.”



How to apply to the PCAFC

The caregiver and service member need to fill out a joint application, which asks for contact information and the VA medical center where the veteran receives or plans to receive care. Applications may be completed online,

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Give

Inspire

Love

Share

This material is funded by the Iowa Geriatric Workforce Enhancement Program (Iowa-GWEP) HRSA U1QHP28731, the University of Iowa Hospital and Clinics and the Midwest Veterans' Biomedical Research Foundation

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Caregiver Support Line (CSL)

Caring for yourself is the best thing you can do for those that depend on you. The support line offers monthly education group sessions that can help. These group sessions are offered over the telephone, so you can listen in the comfort of your own home. These presentations provide self-care tips on a range of topics. Participants can comment and ask questions at the end of each live session.

In order to participate, the Veteran you are caring for must be enrolled in VA Healthcare. Registration is required. To register or learn more, call the VA Caregiver Support Line (1-855-260-3274).

Caregiver Self Care

Quote: "Your body is not an enemy to be conquered and wrestled into submission. Eat well and exercise because you deserve to be healthy and strong. Be patient and kind to yourself, for that will carry you through discouragement and frustration" - Go Kaleo

Exercise: Our bodies can be worn by the care that we give to others and therefore need our attention if we are to avoid becoming depleted. You need care! Don't wait for it to be provided to you, actively seek it out. Take some time out of your day today to soak in a candlelit tub, get a haircut or a massage, take a quiet walk or relax with a cup of tea. Renew your body with some kindness and care and see how it changes your day.



CAREGIVER SUPPORT INFORMATION

Patient File Checklist

Patient File Checklist

Creating a patient file will assist you in advocating for the Veteran.

This file serves many purposes:

- Keeps medical records organized
- Builds a history of the Veteran's health care
- Helps you and the Veteran to partner with the health care team
- Saves time because the Veteran's health information can easily be located You can create a patient file using a simple three ring binder with dividers, an accordion file, or a computer file. As with any tool, the patient file will be useful only if it is kept up-to-date.



Here are some helpful tips:

1. Store the file in a place that makes sense to you — a place where you can grab it quickly in an emergency, or on your way out the door to an appointment.
2. Always keep the file in the same place.
3. Update the Veteran's patient file after every encounter with the health care team whether face-to-face, telephone, vTel, or email.

What should the Veteran's Patient File contain?

- Veteran's Medical History
- Insurance Information
- Medications from both VA and non-VA providers including over the counter medications, vitamins, herbal remedies, etc.
- Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care • Contact information (i.e., telephone numbers, addresses, email) for medical providers, nurses, case managers, and other health care providers
- Your observations of the Veteran's response to treatment
- Notes from the visit
- Questions for the next visit
- A large envelope or pouch to store loose documents or CDs



CAREGIVER SUPPORT INFORMATION

Spirituality and Health

Spirituality and Health

What Do You Need to Know?

Caregivers often sacrifice their own well-being to provide care for others.

This sacrifice can disrupt your beliefs and cause spiritual distress. Symptoms of spiritual distress include:

- Loss of purpose or meaning
- Questioning your faith, values, and beliefs
- Feeling abandoned or punished by God
- Feeling worthless, hopeless, and alone in the world
- Withdrawal from family and friends



Why is spirituality important to your health?

There seems to be a connection between the mind, body, and spirit. When you have spiritual distress, your entire being is affected. While physical health is easy to measure, spiritual health is not. Being healthy spiritually means showing love to yourself and others. You have a sense of inner peace and contentment. You value life and are thankful for what you have. Being spiritually healthy can help you cope with the stress of being a caregiver.

What to Discuss with Healthcare Team

- Talk to your healthcare provider if you are feeling spiritual distress.
- Your provider can refer you to a local clergyman or spiritual advisor.
- If you attend a house of worship, speak to your pastor or priest.
- Ask your healthcare provider about support groups in your area.

Relax

Source: www.caregiver.va.org



CAREGIVER SUPPORT INFORMATION

Spirituality and Health

*You deserve to care for you as you care for your Veteran!
Thank You, for all that you do!*



Helpful Tips

Think about what nourishes your spirit and makes you feel at peace. Set aside time each day to practice these things. This may include:

- Practicing prayer or meditation. Some people find prayer or meditation to be helpful. Benefits include lower stress and better overall health.
- Volunteering in the community. Helping others can put your problems into perspective. It can also provide you with a sense of purpose and pride.
- Read the bible or other inspirational books. Some people find comfort in God's word. Reading about other's triumphs over adversity can inspire you.
- Attend a house of worship. Some people find a sense of community when surrounded by others who share

Remember

- Strengthening your spiritual side can help you cope with the stress of caregiving.
- There seems to be a connection between the mind, body and spirit. When you have spiritual distress, other areas of your body and mind are affected.



*Think about what nourishes your spirit
and makes you feel at peace.
Set aside time every day to practice these things.*

Source: www.caregiver.va.org

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CAREGIVER SUPPORT INFORMATION

Beyond The Blues

Beyond the Blues and Coping with Caregiver Depression

Are you a caregiver that is carrying the heavy weight of depression?

Caregivers are at least two times more apt to suffer from depression than others. Depression is an illness not a reflection of your strength as a person.

Depression is not a sign of being weak. You wouldn't think you were weak because you had any other medical illness. Depression that isn't treated harms your thoughts, feelings and physical health. Don't ignore this serious medical concern!



What are the symptoms of Depressive Illness? Feeling sad is a normal part of life. How do you determine when you have crossed into a clinical depression? Feeling sad, moody, or frustrated for short periods of time is a normal part of life. Depression is an illness with certain symptoms.

The symptoms must occur for at least a two-week period of time.

You would have at least one of these two symptoms for at least 2 weeks:

- Depressed mood most of the day nearly every day
- Loss of interest or pleasure in almost all activities Plus + Four or more of the following symptoms also present for at least 2 weeks:
 - Eating more or less than normal with weight loss or weight gain
 - Poor sleep either being unable to fall asleep, stay asleep, or sleeping excessively
 - Feeling physically agitated or physically slowed down
 - Fatigue or loss of energy • Negative thoughts of being worthless, excessive guilty or worried thoughts
 - Difficulty thinking clearly or making decisions, poor concentration and memory
 - ♦ Reoccurring thoughts of death, or suicidal thoughts or planning

What causes Depressive Illness?

- Biological factors – disruptions in brain chemicals called neurotransmitters
- Genetic factors - if family members struggled with a mood disorder, VA Caregiver Support Line 1-(855) 260-3274

Source: www.caregiver.va.org

Save Lives Act

allows VA to soon provide COVID-19 vaccinations to all Veterans, their spouses, and caregivers



WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden signed the **SAVE LIVES Act** into law, expanding VA's legal authority to provide COVID-19 vaccines to all Veterans, regardless of their VA health care enrollment status, as well as Veteran spouses, caregivers and some beneficiaries.

The SAVE LIVES Act removed some of the legal limits on the medical care VA can provide to Veterans, based on **health care eligibility** and **priority groups**.

The expanded authority depends on readily available COVID-19 vaccine supply and requires VA to continue to prioritize vaccinations and healthcare delivery for our nation's Veterans enrolled in VA care.

"The SAVE LIVES Act increases the number of individuals who are eligible to get lifesaving COVID-19 vaccines from VA

from 9.5 million to more than 33 million," said VA Secretary Denis McDonough. "Meeting the task of vaccinating this expanded population will be a tremendous undertaking for the VA and will require a significant increase in our allocation of vaccine supply, but I am confident that VA's workforce is up to the task."

VA is providing COVID-19 vaccinations to Veterans and employees per its **COVID-19 Vaccination Plan**. As of March 24, VA has fully vaccinated 1,594,812 individuals, including Veterans, VA employees and federal partners.

Source: www.caregiver.va.org

Caregiving Tips - PTSD

What is Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)



Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is an anxiety disorder.

The diagnosis of PTSD is made when a Veteran has been exposed to a traumatic event in which both of the following have occurred:

- *The Veteran experienced or witnessed an event that involved actual or threatened death or serious injury.*
- *The Veteran experienced a threat to the physical well-being of him/herself or others, and the Veteran's response involved intense fear, helplessness or horror.*

Treatment may include:

Individual therapy and/or group therapy, medication.

Physical and Mental Changes to Expect:

While the general symptoms for PTSD are similar, the types and severity of symptoms will differ for each Veteran.

Physical changes may include: difficulty staying or falling asleep; irritability or outbursts of anger; physical reactions—such as profuse sweating, increased heart rate and rapid breathing—when exposed to internal or external cues or reminders of the traumatic event; intense distress when exposed to internal or external reminders of the event such as certain sounds or smells; avoiding any activities, places or people that remind the Veteran of the trauma.

Mental changes may include: recurring and intrusive thoughts about the event; recurring and distressing dreams of the event; acting or feeling as if it the traumatic event were recurring—also known as having flashbacks; being unable to recall an important aspect of the trauma; difficulty concentrating; and efforts to avoid thoughts, feeling or conversations associated with the trauma.

Emotional changes may include: intense distress when exposed to internal or external reminders of the event such as certain sounds or smells; a noticeable lack of interest or participation in important activities; feelings of detachment or estrangement from others; limited ability or inability to show affection or love; feelings of a bleak future, such as limited career or family opportunities, and shortened life span; overly alert or on guard—also known as “hyper-vigilance”—and/or exaggerated response when startled.

Caregiving Tips - PTSD ...

What does This Mean for Me?

One of the areas in which you may notice a difference is in your social lives. The Veteran you care for may become uncomfortable in large crowds or unfamiliar places, and so you may find yourself feeling more socially isolated, losing support networks, or feeling the need to compensate for the Veteran you care for in social situations that are uncomfortable for him or her while providing support and encouragement at the same time. You may also have to learn coping skills to manage the stigma that is sometimes associated with mental health disorders.

You may also notice a difference in your personal relationship with the Veteran you care for. It is important to understand that it may be harder to talk to the Veteran due to changes in his or her behavior and/or communication style.

In addition, if the Veteran is experiencing difficulty managing his or her anger, you may feel like you live in an atmosphere of constant chaos. If the Veteran you are caring for is your spouse or partner, you may experience additional changes in your relationship. This might include feeling worried that your Veteran is no longer emotionally or physically attracted to you due to emotional unavailability, or a decreased interest in physical intimacy and sexual activity. In addition, due to sleep disturbance (for example, insomnia, waking-up frequently, nightmares), many couples choose to sleep in separate beds (and rooms), which may cause further feelings of emotional separation.

At times, you may experience your own feelings of sadness, anger, frustration, discouragement and loss when the Veteran you care for experiences symptoms of PTSD. These reactions are normal, but can be challenging to deal with.

Caregiving Tips

- Learn as much as you can about PTSD by reading, going to lectures, talking with others in similar situations, and talking with the Veteran's treatment team. A good place to start your learning is [VA's National Center for PTSD](#).
- Consider encouraging the Veteran you care for to seek mental health treatment. VA has proven treatments for PTSD that help Veterans manage their symptoms in all types of environments. Just remember that not everyone is ready to admit they need help, so if there is no threat of harming themselves or others, respect a Veteran's decision about seeking treatment.
- If the Veteran you care for decides to seek treatment, encourage and fully support that decision. It's important for both of you.
- Request to be part of the Veteran's treatment. If the Veteran you care for agrees, talk with the mental health providers regularly. Ask questions and take notes.
- Recognize the Veteran's social and/or emotional withdrawal is due to his or her own issues and not your relationship. A Veteran with PTSD will have good days and bad days. Foster relationships with family, friends, and others to stay connected and get support.
- Learn coping skills to manage stigma sometimes associated with mental health disorders.
- Pay attention to warning signs of a potential relapse, including an increase in symptoms or other changes in behavior. Keep the psychiatrist and/or therapist, local crisis team, Veterans Crisis Line, and other emergency phone numbers handy.
- If any Veteran talks about suicide, take it seriously and seek help immediately. The Veterans Crisis Line is 1-800-273-8255 (Press 1 for Veterans).
- Remember to pay attention to your own needs. Visit your doctor regularly, and get plenty of rest so you can stay strong.

Your health is essential to your ability to keep providing for the Veteran you care for.



Emergency Preparedness

Emergencies always seem to happen when we least expect them, but that doesn't mean we can't be prepared.

Being prepared can save you and your Veteran significant time, energy and hardship. Emergencies may range from a leaking roof, to a power outage, to a large flood, fire or hurricane requiring complete evacuation and relocation. Whatever the emergency, preparing now can help ease the burden later. As a caregiver, when disaster strikes, you will be responsible not only for the care and well-being of your Veteran, but for your own needs.

Do you know what to do?

Take some time to consider your daily activities including those caregiving activities you complete for your Veteran.

- ⇒ *What items do you use every day? Consider eyeglasses, medications, and clothing needs.*
- ⇒ *What items are necessary and what can you do without?*
- ⇒ *How will you pay bills if you have to be relocated?*
- ⇒ *What if the power is out for an extended period of time and your Veteran is dependent upon oxygen or a ventilator?*
- ⇒ *If you have to leave quickly, are medications readily available?*
- ⇒ *Do you or your Veteran have pets? How will they be taken care of?*



These are just a few of the questions we encourage you to begin asking yourself and have some quick tips to help you plan. The tasks we do every day, often without thinking, are the ones most impacted by emergencies.

VA wants to help provide you with some tools to assist in planning for the unexpected. Checklists are available to provide some examples of ideas to consider. The following information is not meant to be all inclusive, rather topics to help you begin thinking about "what if..."

Emergencies don't have to become disasters, and disasters can be managed. Preparedness matters!

How to Prepare for an Emergency

Certainly, we know we cannot control Mother Nature, but we can prepare by identifying the types of natural disasters for which we are at most at risk, depending upon geographical areas. Are you most at risk for a blizzard or ice storm where you may be trapped in your home for days at a time? Perhaps you live in an area where wild fires or hurricanes are common, and you are at high risk of needing to be evacuated from your home. Maybe you live near a power plant which is at risk of gas leaks or a river which has a history of flooding.

The American Red Cross offers valuable information on the various types of natural and man-made disasters, including specific factors to consider and prepare for. You may wish to visit the link at: <http://www.redcross.org>. *

While it is impossible to plan for every contingency, there are some basic things you can do. Planning for what you CAN control, allows you to better manage crises when they occur.

What is an Emergency?

An emergency is any unexpected event which may interrupt your ability to provide care to your loved one. This may range from a medical emergency or a temporary power outage to a natural or manmade disaster such as flooding, fire, and hurricane or bomb threat.

Prepare an Emergency Supply Kit

Do you have a week's worth of medication, enough food and water in the event of an extended power outage, and a flashlight with extra batteries? If you are caring for someone who requires oxygen, what is the plan to ensure a continued supply? These are just a few of the questions to consider when preparing for emergencies or disasters.

Source: www.caregiver.va.org

Emergency Preparedness ...

Consider using checklists to help you organize this information, including medication lists and emergency contacts. Whether you create your own, or use those already developed, enjoy peace of mind that you are prepared!

Remember to take care of your own needs!

While it will be crucial to ensure the needs of your Veteran are met during times of emergencies, it is equally important to attend to your own needs. As you prepare your Veteran for the unexpected, prepare for yourself. When gathering important documents for your Veteran, also make sure to gather your own documents. Create your own medication list, and your own list of emergency contacts. **Your needs are critical too!**

Consider supplying your kit with the following:

- Non perishable food items, including a can opener for canned goods
 - Water- plan on 1 gallon of water, per person, per day. If you have pets, ensure you are planning on them as well!
 - Basic first aid kit
 - Cell phone with charger and extra battery
 - Flashlights with batteries
 - Candles & Matches
 - Battery operated radio
 - Emergency contact names and numbers in waterproof sheath
 - Identification (photocopies of identification, driver's license, Social Security card, Medicare card, other health insurance information, credit cards)
 - Cash and coins
 - Sanitation-related items, alcohol-based hand sanitizer, basic personal hygiene items such as toothbrush, toothpaste, denture needs, soap, shampoo, feminine products, wipes, bathroom tissue, garbage bags
 - Change of clothing and specific clothing items for varying types of weather to include shoes/sneakers/boots
- Keep medications in a central location so that they may be easily located and packed into your kit in the event of an evacuation!

All kits should also include important documents, stored in a water proof pack, which includes:

- Copy of your birth certificate
- List of your medical conditions
- Medication list
- List of current physicians
- Allergies
- Immunization records
- Bank account information
- Names and phone numbers of emergency contacts
- Legal paperwork such as Power of Attorney or Advance Directives
- Copies of insurance card(s) or numbers
- Personal identification
- Copy of any Advanced Directives, including Health Care Proxy or Living Will documents

Source: www.caregiver.va.org



Caregiver and Family Support Group Teleconference

Every 4th Thursday from 2pm-3pm.
The next group will be held

THURSDAY, APRIL 22, 2021



This material is funded by the Iowa Geriatric Workforce Enhancement Program (Iowa-GWEP) HRSA U1QHP28731, the University of Iowa Hospital and Clinics and the Midwest Veterans' Biomedical Research Foundation

You are not alone. 
You are not alone. 

You are not alone.
ΛΟΝ ΣΤΕ ΠΟΤ ΣΤΟΝΕ'

#breakthestigma

MAY 2021

MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

**VA EKHCS
Caregiver Support Group**

*Support and Education on Caring for Veterans
with Mental Health or Dementia Challenges*

YOU ARE NOT ALONE

Now more than ever, we need to find ways to stay connected with our community. No one should feel alone or without the information, support and help they need.

Mental Health Awareness Month

Mental Health Awareness Month has been observed in May in the United States since 1949.

The month is observed with media, local events, and film screenings.

Mental Health Awareness Month began in the United States in 1949 and was started by the Mental Health America organization.

You are not alone.

For 2021's Mental Health Awareness Month NAMI will continue to amplify the message of "You Are Not Alone." We will use this time to focus on the healing value of connecting in safe ways, prioritizing mental health and acknowledging that it's okay to not be okay through NAMI's blog, personal stories, videos, digital toolkits, social media engagements and national events.

Together, we can realize our shared vision of a nation where anyone affected by mental illness can get the appropriate support and quality of care to live healthy, fulfilling lives — a nation where no one feels alone in their struggle.

800-950-NAMI

Get Involved! Visit the website below!

<https://www.nami.org/Get-Involved/Awareness-Events/Mental-Health-Awareness-Month>

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

CBT proposes that symptoms of anxiety/depression are influenced by one's thoughts, emotions, physical feelings and behavior. The cycle works like a snowball.

This snowball can move in a positive, negative or neutral direction. Changing one part of the cycle (thoughts, feelings [emotional or physical] or behaviors) can change the cycle for better or worse.



Learning Strategies

There are strategies that can aid in the use of the skills, depending on the level of the Veteran's cognitive difficulties. For example, reminder cards (such as index cards) with highlights of the skill can be placed in areas frequented by the Veteran (bedside table, wallet/purse, bathroom mirror, refrigerator door, etc.). Repeated practice when the Veteran is calm and when they are anxious can also reinforce use of the skills. Depending on the Veteran's level of cognitive difficulties, a coach may have to help encourage them to practice and use the skills. A daily time to review materials may help make use of the skills part of a routine. Review of skill use during subsequent visits with the providers can serve as a reminder to use skills, as well as an opportunity to brainstorm use of skills for current or upcoming stressors. Asking the Veteran to summarize the skill and times when they can use this skill can be helpful in evaluating his/her understanding of the skill and how it could be used in anxiety causing situations.

REFERENCES Camp, C. J., Koss, E., & Judge, K. (1999) Cognitive assessment in late-stage dementia. In: P. A. Lichtenberg (Ed), Handbook of assessment in clinical gerontology (pp. 442-67). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.



Warning Signs and Symptoms of Mental Illness

Trying to tell the difference between what expected behaviors are and what might be the signs of a mental illness isn't always easy. There's no easy test that can let someone know if there is mental illness or if actions and thoughts might be typical behaviors of a person or the result of a physical illness. Each illness has its own symptoms, but common signs of mental illness in adults and adolescents can include the following:

- Excessive worrying or fear
- Feeling excessively sad or low
- Confused thinking or problems concentrating and learning
- Extreme mood changes, including uncontrollable "highs" or feelings of euphoria
- Prolonged or strong feelings of irritability or anger
- Avoiding friends and social activities
- Difficulties understanding or relating to other people
- Changes in sleeping habits or feeling tired and low energy
- Changes in eating habits such as increased hunger or lack of appetite
- Changes in sex drive
- Difficulty perceiving reality (delusions or hallucinations, in which a person experiences and senses things that don't exist in objective reality)
- Inability to perceive changes in one's own feelings, behavior or personality ("lack of insight" or anosognosia)
- Overuse of substances like alcohol or drugs
- Multiple physical ailments without obvious causes (such as headaches, stomach aches, vague and ongoing "aches and pains")
- Thinking about suicide
- Inability to carry out daily activities or handle daily problems and stress
- An intense fear of weight gain or concern with appearance

Mental health conditions can also begin to develop in young children. Because they're still learning how to identify and talk about thoughts and emotions, their most obvious symptoms are behavioral. Symptoms in children may include the following:

- Changes in school performance
- Excessive worry or anxiety, for instance fighting to avoid bed or school
- Hyperactive behavior
- Frequent nightmares
- Frequent disobedience or aggression
- Frequent temper tantrums



Warning Signs and Symptoms of Mental Illness...

Where To Get Help

Don't be afraid to reach out if you or someone you know needs help. Learning all you can about mental health is an important first step.

Reach out to your health insurance, primary care doctor or state/county mental health authority for more resources.

Contact the NAMI HelpLine 800-950-NAMI
to find out what services and supports are available in your community.

If you or someone you know needs help now, you should immediately call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255 or call 911.



After diagnosis, a health care provider can help develop a treatment plan that could include medication, therapy or other lifestyle changes.

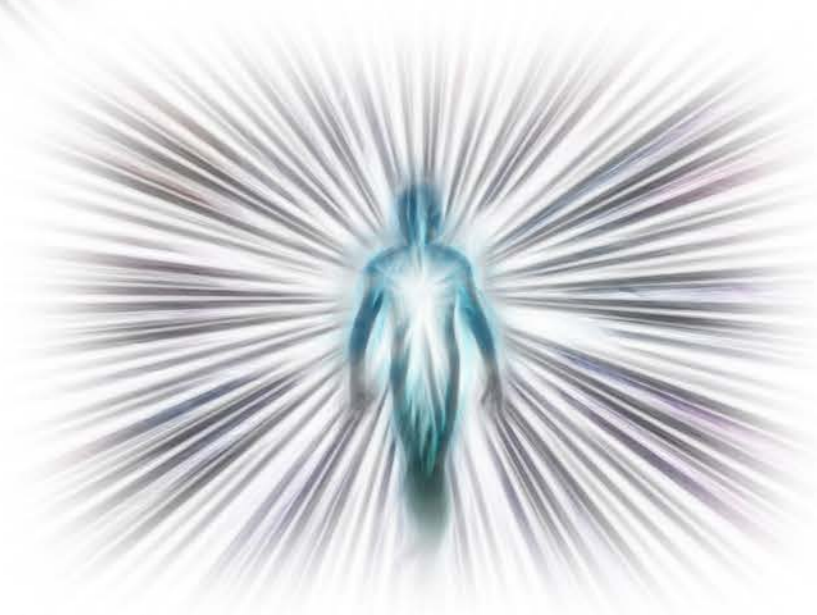
Finding Treatment

Getting a diagnosis is just the first step; knowing your own preferences and goals is also important. Treatments for mental illness vary by diagnosis and by person. There's no "one size fits all" treatment. Treatment options can include medication, counseling (therapy), social support and education.

Receiving A Diagnosis

Knowing warning signs can help let you know if you need to speak to a professional. For many people, getting an accurate diagnosis is the first step in a treatment plan.

Unlike diabetes or cancer, there is no medical test that can accurately diagnose mental illness. A mental health professional will use the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, published by the American Psychiatric Association, to assess symptoms and make a diagnosis. The manual lists criteria including feelings and behaviors and time limits in order to be officially classified as a mental health condition.





CAREGIVER SUPPORT INFORMATION

Dementia and Alzheimer's Disease

What is Dementia?

Dementia is a brain disorder affecting a person's ability to carry out daily activities.

The most common form of Dementia among seniors is Alzheimer's disease, which involves the parts of the brain that control thought, memory, and language.

There is no known cause or cure for Alzheimer's disease; however, medications, along with other treatments and strategies, will help you and the Veteran you care for enjoy a better quality of life.

Treatment may Include: Medications may help with symptoms, but currently there is no treatment to stop or reverse Alzheimer's disease.

Physical and Mental Changes to Expect

There are some common mental changes that can occur with people diagnosed with Alzheimer's or Dementia, but each person will have a different experience. A Veteran with either of these conditions may be very unpredictable. Alzheimer's disease begins slowly and ends with severe brain damage. As the disease progresses, symptoms are more easily noticeable and become serious enough to cause individuals with Alzheimer's disease or their family members to seek professional caregiving help.

Physical changes may include: forgetting how to brush his/her teeth or comb his/her hair; Incontinence, which means being unable to control bodily functions; poor eating habits and problems with speaking, understanding, reading, and writing.

Mental changes may include: mild to severe forgetfulness; trouble remembering recent events, activities, or names of familiar people or things; being unable to make decisions and handle money; hallucinations and/or delusions.

Emotional issues may include: anxiety, depression, and sundowning — a condition in which the Veteran may suffer extreme agitation and confusion during the late afternoon or early evening hours.

Other problems associated with the disease may include: behavior problems such as sleeplessness, agitation, becoming aggressive, repeating questions, wandering, and wanting to be with his or her Caregivers all of the time.

What Does This Mean for Me?

As a Caregiver, you can have a positive impact on how the Veteran you care for deals with this condition. You can be encouraging and supportive as he or she faces the struggles, frustrations and changes associated with conditions like Alzheimer's and Dementia.

The life of the Veteran you care for can change depending on the types and severity of symptoms he or she is experiencing. Your life may change dramatically as you adjust your already busy schedule to include increasing care needs for the Veteran you care for. In addition, the amount of information you'll need to make good caregiving decisions may feel overwhelming — this is a normal reaction.

Remember that you are not alone and that it's okay to ask for help.

Caregiving is very demanding, so don't feel guilty or as though you have failed if you need help.

Support is available, and you should feel comfortable seeking it out.

If you don't know who to turn to, a good first step is to call

VA's Caregiver Support Line at 1-855-260-3274.

Caregiving Tips

Educate yourself. Understanding Alzheimer's disease and its related physical and emotional symptoms will help you and the Veteran you care for in coping with the disease and in managing it for the long term.

To help **minimize confusion** while you are providing care for the Veteran, give short simple instructions in a calm voice, and stick to a routine whenever possible.

If the Veteran you care for is experiencing restlessness, **keep him or her active during the day, or provide him or her with simple tasks.** These tips can help keep the Veteran you care for occupied and reduce restlessness.

If the Veteran you care for is having a hard time controlling his or her bodily functions, accidents and receiving assistance in the bathroom can be embarrassing and uncomfortable. In these instances, **offer him or her reassurance and support,** and, if an accident occurs, don't blame or scold.

You can't predict where or when the Veteran you care for might wander. **Modify your home environment to make it safe,** have the Veteran wear an identity bracelet, and let neighbors know about his or her condition so they can assist you in keeping the Veteran you care for safe if he or she leaves the home unexpectedly.

Choose clothes that are easy to care for and use Velcro instead of zippers and buttons when possible.

The Veteran you care for will have good days and bad days, both emotionally and physically — which can be hard on you. If you become frustrated, step away for a little while. Ask someone to stay with the Veteran so you can catch a break. You can also take the Veteran you care for to adult day care or request respite up to three times a year from VA to give you some time by yourself.

Visit your doctor regularly for YOUR needs, and get plenty of rest so you can stay strong.

Remember, you are doing the best you can and you are making a difference in your loved one's life. Your health is essential to your ability to keep providing for the Veteran you care for.

Annie Caregiver Text Support

Annie is a text messaging service that promotes self-care for Veterans enrolled in VA health care, as well as for caregivers.

Annie sends stress management tips via text messaging to caregivers, three times per week. Messages may be educational, motivational or an activity to manage stress. You may pause or stop the service at any time.

Interested in this program?

With VA's Caregiver Support Line – 1-855-260-3274 – assistance is just a quick phone call away.

Resources for Enhancing All Caregivers Health (REACH) VA

Connect with a coach who will provide you with a workbook and help you with a variety of issues caregivers face. They will coach you in stress management, problem solving, self-care and healthy behaviors, as well as, Veteran safety, behaviors, problems or concerns linked to a diagnosis. Your assigned coach will call you for a total of four sessions, over a two to three-month period. Learn more about the REACH VA Program.

Contact VA's Caregiver Support Line for program details – 1-855-260-3274.

My REACH VA Coach and the workbook saved my and my husband's life.
– Caregiver, REACH VA Participant

I love working with caregivers because there is no limit to what they can do in just ONE day. This inspires me in my journey to help them along the way.
– Roxy, REACH VA Coach for 3 years

Source: https://www.caregiver.va.gov/Care_Caregivers.asp

Building Better Caregivers™ (BBC)

Building Better Caregivers is an on-line six (6) week workshop.

Building Better Caregivers helps caregivers in two key ways: training in how to provide better care, and helping caregivers learn how to manage their own emotions, stress and physical health. After the six (6) week workshop, you can stay connected to other caregivers through the alumni community. **This service is free and secure. Connect with other caregivers today!**

“The lessons I took in the 6-week program taught me a different way to handle my husband's anger. The other caregivers in the workshop understood the struggles I was going through because they were going through the same thing. He still gets angry, but now we both know how to communicate much better. We're finally doing ok.”

– Karen, BBC Graduate and Caregiver

Interested in this program?

With VA's Caregiver Support Line – 1-855-260-3274

– assistance is just a quick phone call away.

https://www.caregiver.va.gov/Care_Caregivers.asp

Press Release—March 11, 2021

FDA grants VA first ever compassionate use for 3D-printed hearing device

WASHINGTON — The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) received **compassionate use** approval from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in February for a groundbreaking in-house developed medical device to help improve the quality of life of a Veteran with a rare hearing condition.

FDA's compassionate use authorization allows patients access to prototype medications, biologics and medical devices for medical treatment outside of clinical trials when no comparable or satisfactory alternative therapy options exists.

“VA was granted the ability to prescribe an experimental 3D printed audiological device specifically designed for a single patient,” said VA Director of 3D Printing Network Beth Ripley, M.D., PhD. “The 76-year-old Veteran patient has a rare medical condition that causes the ear canal to collapse and muffle sound.”

The 3D printed stent is inserted in the external ear canal to keep it from collapsing and allow sound to pass through. The device is not surgically implanted and can be easily removed by the patient. This unique hearing aid was designed and created by the **integrated 3D printing network** team at the **Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center** in Charleston, South Carolina.

In 2017, VA started integrating and developing its **3D Printing Network**. Since then, the network has expanded to more than 60 VA medical centers exploring possible uses of the technology in clinical settings. Contact VA's Caregiver Support Line – 1-855-260-3274 for details.

Source: <https://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=5638>

Outdoor activities improve mental health in Veterans, study finds

Research has confirmed the psychological benefits of outdoor recreation for Veterans.



Outdoor activities improve mental health in Veterans...

"The findings suggest that extended group-based nature recreation can have significant positive impacts on Veterans struggling with serious health problems," said Dr. Jason Duvall, a research scientist at the University of Michigan and one of the study's lead authors, in a statement. "Although more research is needed and many questions remain, the use of extended group-based outdoor recreation programs to ease Veterans' transition back into civilian life seems to be a promising approach."

The results mirror research conducted by Dr. Jennifer Romesser, a clinical psychologist with the VA Salt Lake City Health Care System in Utah. Romesser, wanted to help Veterans transition to civilian life. One way, she thought, would be through tackling a new skill. A snowboarding enthusiast herself, Romesser initiated a partnership in 2010 with Wasatch Adaptive Sports in the Rocky Mountains.

"The initial objective of the program was to reach out to Veterans that were hesitant to access traditional mental health treatment," she told *Powder* magazine for a May 2013 story. "Skiing served as a way to benefit [Veterans] by getting out, interacting with people, and taking on new challenges."

"Nature," Romesser says, "can help reconnect Veterans with the experience of positive emotion and develop a renewed sense of awe and appreciation for the outdoors."

Source: <https://www.research.va.gov/currents/winter2013-14/winter2013-14-25.cfm>



Taking part in outdoor group activities, like camping, hiking, or snowboarding, could prove beneficial for Veterans with mental health problems. A recent study, funded by the Sierra Club and involving researchers from VA and the University of Michigan, suggests a link between outdoor activities and long-term psychological well-being.

The researchers surveyed Veterans one week before, one week after, and one month after a group wilderness experience. More than half the participants involved reported physical or mental health issues that were interfering with their lives.

The Veterans took part in one of 12 programs, each lasting between four and seven days. There was little, if any, structured therapy. Instead, the emphasis was on the experience. Veterans had the opportunity to go fly-fishing, kayaking, whitewater rafting, backpacking, and more.

Fifty four of the 73 Veterans participating completed the post-experience questionnaire a week after the outing. They reported a greater than 10 percent improvement in psychological well-being, a 9 percent increase in social functioning, and a nearly 8 percent gain in positive life outlook.

Source: <https://www.research.va.gov/currents/winter2013-14/winter2013-14-25.cfm>



Caregiver and Family Support Group Teleconference

Every 4th Thursday from 2pm-3pm.
The next group will be held

THURSDAY, MAY 27, 2021

1-872-701-0185 ACCESS CODE: 589002177

Rita Jaramillo will be calling you for support.
Please let her know of any needs.
Remember to fill-out and return the forms we mail you.

LEC Cell Phone Number:
(785) 250-4632
Mario Lopez ext. 52950
Chardonnay Jones ext. 52951
Our availability is during office hours:
8am-4:30pm M-F.

Please call the LEC VA Cell Phone number (above) if immediate staff contact is needed during normal business hours.

If in a crisis after business hours, please contact:
Call 911 for emergencies
VA Emergency Room: ext. 54347
Veteran's Crisis Hotline:
1-800-273-8255, then press 1



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This material is funded by the Iowa Geriatric Workforce Enhancement Program (Iowa-GWEP) HRSA U1QHP28731, the University of Iowa Hospital and Clinics and the Midwest Veterans' Biomedical Research Foundation

You are not alone. You are not alone. ♡ ♡

National Wellness Month

August 2021



Caregivers need care too!

Your loved one would want you to take care of yourself.

Dementia Caregiver Support Group

Cornerstone Family Worship, Tonganoxie:

Meets in person on the first Wednesday of every month at 6:30 pm

Basehor Library:

Meets in person and by Zoom on the first Thursday of every month at 6:30 pm

Join us in this safe supportive environment for caregivers.

Dr. Maritza Buenaver, Geriatric Psychiatrist specializing in dementia education,

August is National Wellness Month

“It’s a good time to reflect on your own health.”

ICAA Defines wellness as:

“Wellness is derived from our ability to understand, accept and act upon our capacity to lead a purpose-filled and engaged life. In doing so, we can embrace our potential (physical, emotional, spiritual, intellectual, social, environmental, vocational) to pursue and optimize life’s possibilities.”

The International Council on Aging has created a wellness model that involves seven dimensions of wellness. Take a moment to read about them and consider them in context with your health and how they may impact your daily life.

ICAA “Seven Dimensions of Wellness”

1. **Emotional:** How you cope with your own feelings can have a direct impact on your emotional frame of mind. If you find yourself feeling stressed with persistent negative thoughts, you may want to consider peer counseling and stress management classes to help you better cope. Caregivers should seek out dementia support groups in your area.
2. **Intellectual, cognitive:** When was the last time you played a game of cards or a board game, such as chess? Engaging in stimulating activities helps keep our brains sharp and our outlook intellectually active. These games can be helpful to those with mild cognitive impairment, helping to retain brain pathways to keep memory intact for as long as possible.
3. **Physical:** We all know how important regular physical activity is to our overall wellbeing. Why is it so hard to get up and get moving? You don’t have to run a marathon to experience the benefits of physical activity. Try walking or a light, daily workout. Encourage an elderly loved one to join you. Try also to substitute healthy foods for processed foods and high sugar desserts. Limit your alcohol intake and, if you smoke, make the commitment to stop. Follow some common sense guidelines and you’ll look better and feel better!
4. **Professional, vocational:** Everyone needs to have a sense of purpose in life. Even if you are retired, there are lots of things you can do to feel useful. Learning new skills and keeping old ones sharp help us to stay connected to the world around us. If you are caring for a loved one with dementia, find things that he or she can do to contribute, no matter how small. It can make a big difference.
5. **Social:** Few things can do more damage to our wellbeing than becoming socially isolated. Maintaining ties with family and friends is so important, especially as we age. For individuals with dementia, those relationships take on new meaning, helping them connect with their earlier lives and keep the brain active and engaged. Make sure you regularly participate in activities that bring you in contact with others. If you have a loved one with dementia, try arranging visits from young family members and friends. Inter-generational activities are particularly beneficial to wellness.

6. **Spiritual:** Whether you consider yourself “religious” or not, most of us feel a sense of calmness when we are able to put aside our own frustrations and focus on more spiritual elements and concepts. Whether it involves regularly visiting your own house of worship or engaging in other spiritual activities, such as meditation, making the higher connection has a way of easing the daily stress of living and focusing outside of ourselves on connecting to the greater world around us.
7. **Environmental:** Taking better care of the world around us can help us to take better care of ourselves. Doing small, daily things to help keep your immediate environment “greener” makes good sense, promoting the wellness concept out to benefit others. Look for ways you can get better at recycling and taking care of your environment. You’ll feel better for contributing and doing your part to make the world safer and healthier for those generations that follow. *Source: <https://www.icaa.cc/activeagingandwellness/>*

“What if I am overwhelmed and don’t have extra time?”

Many caregivers do not have the luxury of a lot of extra time. Therefore, many caregivers end up being the last one on the list ... typically, the day is over and the exhausted caregiver has nothing to give back to themselves. There are many fantastic things we can do to care for ourselves that sound AMAZING, but when caregivers are very busy, it’s not so easy to make it happen. So, let’s keep it simple and try translating this collage below into something you can consistently work into your day as a start. Perhaps, you might replace some of the images with something that applies to Your favorite doable simple things. Some caregivers put things out where they can see them as a reminder to give themselves that precious 60 seconds or just 5 minutes ... maybe even 15 or 30 minutes, meant especially for them. Whether it’s shorter or longer, make room for that empowering moment to give back to Yourself and say with passion,

“I do deserve this” ... Then, do it!

Source: Article written/composed by Diane Greenlaw



Find a Caregiver Support Group that's right for you

A sampling of caregiver support groups

Caregivers can find peer support in all sorts of settings, from meeting rooms at community centers to Facebook groups and online forums with thousands of active users. Here are some places to connect with support groups serving particular caregiving communities or the larger caregiver population.

Alzheimer's Association: www.alz.org

Alzheimer's and Dementia Resource Center: www.adrccares.org

Dementia Caregivers Support Group: www.facebook.com/groups/672984902717938

Latino's Alzheimer's and Memory Disorders Alliance:
www.latinosalzheimersalliance.org

Memory People: www.facebook.com/groups/180666768616259

Source: anthemmemorycare.com



*"To love a person is to see all of their magic,
and to remind them of it
when they have forgotten."*

- Anonymous



National Preparedness Month September 2021



 **You are not alone.**
YOU ARE NOT ALONE

Prepare to Protect.

Preparing for Disasters Protects Everyone You Love

Dementia Caregiver Support Group

Cornerstone Family Worship, Tonganoxie:

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Join us in this safe supportive environment for caregivers.

Dr. Maritza Buenaver, Geriatric Psychiatrist specializing in dementia education, will guide us as we share our experiences. Anyone is welcome to join us.



Emergency Preparedness

Emergencies always seem to happen when we least expect them, but that doesn't mean we can't be prepared.

Being prepared can save you and your loved one significant time, energy and hardship. Emergencies may range from a leaking roof, to a power outage, to a large flood, fire or hurricane requiring complete evacuation and relocation. Whatever the emergency, preparing now can help ease the burden later. As a caregiver, when disaster strikes, you will be responsible not only for the care and well-being of your loved one, but for your own needs.

Do you know what to do?

Take some time to consider your daily activities including those caregiving activities you complete for your loved one with dementia.

- ⇒ *What items do you use every day? Consider eyeglasses, medications, and clothing needs.*
- ⇒ *What items are necessary and what can you do without?*
- ⇒ *How will you pay bills if you have to be relocated?*
- ⇒ *What if the power is out for an extended period of time and your loved one is dependent upon oxygen or a ventilator?*
- ⇒ *If you have to leave quickly, are medications readily available?*
- ⇒ *Do you or your loved one have pets? How will they be taken care of?*

These are just a few of the questions we encourage you to begin asking yourself and have some quick tips to help you plan. The tasks we do every day, often without thinking, are the ones most impacted by emergencies.



Checklists are available to provide some examples of ideas to consider. The following information is not meant to be all inclusive, rather topics to help you begin thinking about the "what if..."

Emergencies don't have to become disasters, and disasters can be managed. Preparedness matters!

How to Prepare for an Emergency

Certainly, we know we cannot control Mother Nature, but we can prepare by identifying the types of natural disasters for which we are at most at risk, depending upon geographical areas. Are you most at risk for a blizzard or ice storm where you may be trapped in your home for days at a time? Perhaps you live in an area where wild fires or hurricanes are common, and you are at high risk of needing to be evacuated from your home. Maybe you live near a power plant which is at risk of gas leaks or a river which has a history of flooding.

The American Red Cross offers valuable information on the various types of natural and man-made disasters, including specific factors to consider and prepare for. You may wish to visit the link at: <http://www.redcross.org>. *

While it is impossible to plan for every contingency, there are some basic things you can do. Planning for what you CAN control, allows you to better manage crises when they occur.

What is an Emergency?

An emergency is any unexpected event which may interrupt your ability to provide care to your loved one. This may range from a medical emergency or a temporary power outage to a natural or manmade disaster such as flooding, fire, and hurricane or bomb threat.

Prepare an Emergency Supply Kit

Do you have a week's worth of medication, enough food and water in the event of an extended power outage, and a flashlight with extra batteries? If you are caring for someone who requires oxygen, what is the plan to ensure a continued supply? These are just a few of the questions to consider when preparing for emergencies or disasters.

Emergency Preparedness ...

Consider using checklists to help you organize this information, including medication lists and emergency contacts. Whether you create your own, or use those already developed, enjoy peace of mind that you are prepared!

Remember to take care of your own needs!

While it will be crucial to ensure the needs of your loved one are met during times of emergencies, it is equally important to attend to your own needs. As you prepare your loved one for the unexpected, prepare for yourself. When gathering important documents for your loved one, also make sure to gather your own documents. Create your own medication list, and your own list of emergency contacts. **Your needs are critical too!**

Consider supplying your kit with the following:

- Non perishable food items, including a can opener for canned goods
 - Water- plan on 1 gallon of water, per person, per day. If you have pets, ensure you are planning on them as well!
 - Basic first aid kit
 - Cell phone with charger and extra battery
 - Flashlights with batteries
 - Candles & Matches
 - Battery operated radio
 - Emergency contact names and numbers in waterproof sheath
 - Identification (photocopies of identification, driver's license, Social Security card, Medicare card, other health insurance information, credit cards)
 - Cash and coins
 - Sanitation-related items, alcohol-based hand sanitizer, basic personal hygiene items such as toothbrush, toothpaste, denture needs, soap, shampoo, feminine products, wipes, bathroom tissue, garbage bags
 - Change of clothing and specific clothing items for varying types of weather to include shoes/sneakers/boots
- Keep medications in a central location so that they may be easily located and packed into your kit in the event of an evacuation!

All kits should also include important documents, stored in a water proof pack, which includes:

- Copy of your birth certificate
- List of your medical conditions
- Medication list
- List of current physicians
- Allergies
- Immunization records
- Bank account information
- Names and phone numbers of emergency contacts
- Legal paperwork such as Power of Attorney or Advance Directives
- Copies of insurance card(s) or numbers
- Personal identification
- Copy of any Advanced Directives, including Health Care Proxy or Living Will documents

Find a Caregiver Support Group that's right for you

A sampling of caregiver support groups

Caregivers can find peer support in all sorts of settings, from meeting rooms at community centers to Facebook groups and online forums with thousands of active users. Here are some places to connect with support groups serving particular caregiving communities or the larger caregiver population.

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Source: anthemmemorycare.com



 **You are not alone.**
ALONE IS NOT STRONG

Trick or Treat *Through the Eyes of Dementia*

**Enjoy the fun
safely while
reducing anxiety
and confusion**



October 2021

Dementia Caregiver Support Group

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Trick or Treat?

Holiday triggers that can affect your loved one with dementia.

The kids seem so adorable to “us.”

But, it’s important to first understand the anxiety and confusion that can be terrifying for those suffering from dementia.



Sudden Changes in Environment

People suffering from any form of dementia can become agitated with the sudden transformation of the home, scary decorations, and other activities that are not part of their normal daily routine. This causes additional confusion and can manifest into behavioral problems.

What is actually happening from their perspective:

- *Decorations and cobwebs are actually scary.*
- *Strange new environment contributes to the underlying fear of everything around them.*
- *Fear is compounded with friends and family wearing masks and costumes. Familiar voices with different faces adds to the confusion and feeling unsafe.*
- *Misperceived threats of multiple loud strangers knocking or pounding on the door and asking for candy disrupts your loved one’s comfortable safe haven.*

“To care for those who once cared for us is one of the highest honors.”

– Tia Walker, *The Inspired Caregiver: Finding Joy While Caring for Those You Love*

Source: www.caregiver.va.org





Holidays can be fun for everyone!

Head into the season armed with these proactive ideas to help keep spirits up and empower caregivers and their loved ones to enjoy the festivities.



Helpful Holiday Tips

Spending the holidays should be a joyous occasion. When someone has dementia, however, maintaining the holiday spirit can take a little extra work.

- **Make Efforts to Include Them**

If your loved one isn't overwhelmed, invite them to hand out candy and be sure to supervise at all times.

- **Create New Memories**

Bake a pumpkin pie or bake sugar cookies and ask them to help decorate them. Watch a movie that they would enjoy (not anything scary). Fill candy bags together and paint mini pumpkins.

- **Be Proactive**

Look for any signs of agitation. If your loved one seems upset, remove them from the environment that is causing the anxiety, confusion, or fear. Do a quiet activity like reading or looking through family photo albums.

- **Plan Ahead**

Though families often want to make sure their senior loved one has the best possible holiday, people with dementia are easily overwhelmed. Instead of loud, blinking, screaming or talking decorations and lights, you may want to choose a more sedate décor.

- **Put Feelings First**

Don't be afraid to make new memories on their terms. If they seem more interested in watching movies than in baking cookies or handing out candy, let the holiday traditions slide and enjoy your time together.

- **Be Kind To Yourself**

Sometimes, the hardest thing for a caregiver is to stop, take a breath, and recharge. You can better assist and support your loved one by making sure you are replenished and healthy. Once the activities are over, perhaps, a quiet and peaceful cup of coffee on the deck or a quiet and peaceful read from a few pages of your favorite book. Many caregivers also enjoy audio books. Or, a nice brunch at your favorite café with friends or family. Even something as simple as a quick nap or pensive quiet time gazing at nature. Adding the occasional paragraph to your diary can be very freeing and empowering. Recognize your limitations and always leave some free time in your schedule for you! *You deserve it **and** your loved one would want that for you.*



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Source: anihememorycare.com



***“The simple act of
caring is heroic.”***

– Edward Albert, actor



 **You are not alone.**
ΛΟΝ ΣΙΓ ΗΟΓ ΣΤΟΙΓ*

NATIONAL

Family Caregivers Month

CARING FOR THE CAREGIVER

“If your compassion does not include yourself, it is incomplete.”

- Jack Kornfield

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Help is here!

Respite Care

Create a Plan to Give Yourself a Caregiving Break



Exhaustion, both emotional and physical, can put a caregiver in the danger zone



Respite-Care Services

A good place to start your search is the **National Association of Area Agencies on Aging**. You'll find contacts for local agencies that can connect you with visiting companions, hourly in-home respite care, adult day care and overnight respite providers.

The association also can tell you about no-cost or low-cost respite programs in your area and whether financial assistance is available from government programs or other sources.

Caregiver Self Care

Quote: "Your body is not an enemy to be conquered and wrested into submission. Eat well and exercise because you deserve to be healthy and strong. Be patient and kind to yourself, for that will carry you through discouragement and frustration" - Go Kaleo

Exercise: Our bodies can be worn by the care that we give to others and therefore need our attention if we are to avoid becoming depleted. You need care! Don't wait for it to be provided to you, actively seek it out. Take some time out of your day today to soak in a candlelit tub, get a haircut or a massage, take a quiet walk or relax with a cup of tea. Renew your body with some kindness and care and see how it changes your day.





CAREGIVER SUPPORT INFORMATION

“Caring for yourself includes reaching out!”

Help is at your fingertips:

Several government and nonprofit agencies offer free respite help, among them:

- **Faith-based caregiving organizations**, including local branches of Faith in Action or Interfaith Caregivers. Many have programs that will set up regular two-hour or three-hour social visits with your loved one, giving you time to spend on yourself.
- **Elder Helpers**, a nonprofit online service that prescreens and posts pictures and bios of local volunteers who want to visit older people and help them by doing basic chores. The visits or services come at no charge.
- **Senior Corps**, a branch of the federal Corporation for National & Community Service. Its Senior Companions program matches volunteers older than 55 with seniors living independently to provide companionship, help with daily tasks and a break for family caregivers.
- **Another option is adult day care.** There are more than 4,000 such programs in the United States, offering supervised activities, social interaction, meals and limited health services. Most centers are open five days a week and some have evening and weekend activities.
- Costs for adult day care can range from \$25 to more than \$100 a day, according to the federal Administration for Community Living. Rates and regulations vary depending on where you live, the type of services offered and whether you're eligible for government financial assistance (for example, through Medicaid, the Veterans Health Administration or the Older Americans Act).



IMPORTANT



“Think about what nourishes your spirit and makes you feel at peace. Set aside time every day to practice these things.”

Self Care

A number of groups are trying to help combat caregiver burnout through respite care:

- **The Alzheimer's Association** offers information and advice on respite care when you're caring for a patient with progressive memory loss.
- **The ARCH National Respite Network and Resource Center** has a respite locator that links you to respite providers and other resources in your state.
- **The National Adult Day Services Association** has consumer information on adult day care services and a tool to find centers in your area.

Source: www.usaging.org



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You are not alone.
DON'T BE HOPELESS



Caregiving is the gift that keeps on giving!

But, caregivers need to give back to themselves as well!

December 2021

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Happy Holidays!

A very special time for you and your loved one with dementia.

Caregivers often sacrifice their own well-being to provide care for others.

This sacrifice can disrupt your beliefs and cause spiritual distress.



Why is spirituality important to your health?

There seems to be a connection between the mind, body, and spirit. When you have spiritual distress, your entire being is affected. While physical health is easy to measure, spiritual health is not. Being healthy spiritually means showing love to yourself and others. You have a sense of inner peace and contentment. You value life and are thankful for what you have. Being spiritually healthy can help you cope with the stress of being a caregiver.

What to discuss with the healthcare team:

- Talk to your healthcare provider if you are feeling spiritual distress.
- Your provider can refer you to a local clergyman or spiritual advisor.
- If you attend a house of worship, speak to your pastor or priest.
- Ask your healthcare provider about support groups in your area.

***“Take rest;
a field that has rested
gives a bountiful crop.”***

- Ovid

Source: agingidaho.gov





The holidays can be fun for everyone!

Head into the season armed with these proactive ideas to help keep spirits up and empower caregivers to “enjoy and be part of” the festivities.

Helpful Holiday Tips

Spending the holidays should be a joyous occasion. When someone has dementia, however, maintaining the holiday spirit can take a little extra work.

- **Make Efforts to Include Them**

Engage your loved one in small talk and, if they're able to help with small tasks (like setting the table or trimming the tree), giving them productive tasks gives them a sense of accomplishment.

- **Stay Positive**

Dementia does not prevent seniors from understanding people's moods and feelings. Start with enjoying your time together. But, if holiday responsibilities start to overwhelm, caregivers should step away and decompress privately and rejoin the party in better spirits.

- **Value Their Input**

Many seniors with dementia can still recall favorite holiday traditions like a holiday movie, tree ornament, or food. Honoring these favorites may even help them to reflect on holidays past.

- **Don't Overwhelm Them**

Though families often want to make sure their senior loved one has the best possible holiday, people with dementia are easily overwhelmed. Instead of decking the halls with glitter and lights, you may want to choose a more sedate décor.

- **Have a Designated Quiet Room**

If they get overwhelmed during the festivities, take them to a safe and quiet room where they can calm down. Play their favorite songs, let them look through family photo albums, and let them rejoin the festivities once they've had a few moments of peace and quiet.

- **Put Feelings First**

Don't be afraid to make new memories on their terms. If they seem more interested in watching movies than in baking cookies, let the holiday traditions slide and enjoy your time together, perhaps taking-in a traditional holiday classic they may recognize and enjoy.

- **Be Creative**

Perhaps a trip to the mall to enjoy looking at the decorations of the season. Or driving through the neighborhood looking at decorated homes and lights. Reading traditional Christmas stories out loud. Listening to and/or singing to favorite holiday or spiritual songs. If they enjoy more stimulation, give them jingle bells to hold and ring while you sing. If you go through the family photo album, don't focus on “remembering” people...focus on objects or what is happening in the picture. Enjoy hot cocoa with a warm blanket (or something your loved one really loves) while watching favorite holiday classics like “It's a Wonderful Life”, etc.

- **Be Kind To Yourself**

Sometimes, the hardest thing for a caregiver is to stop, take a breath, and recharge. You can better assist and support your loved one by making sure You are replenished and healthy.

Perhaps, a quiet and peaceful cup of coffee on the deck or a quiet and peaceful read from a few pages of your favorite book. Or, a nice brunch at your favorite café with friends or family. Even something as simple as a quick nap or pensive quiet time gazing at nature. Adding the occasional paragraph to your diary can be very freeing and empowering. Recognize your limitations and always leave some free time in your schedule for You! You deserve it **and** your loved one would want that for you.

Source: antheememorycare.com



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Source: anthe-memorycare.com

