

C CAREGIVER CHRONICLE

Connections for Caregivers

Caregiver Holiday Stress

By Harper Edgumbe

Winter is upon us and caregiver stress can be a common addition to the bustle of the holiday season. Children of aging

parents may return home to find things aren't quite the same. Long-distance caregivers may find dramatic changes in their loved one's health. How can you manage holiday stress and long distance

caregiving this season?

Managing stress can be as simple as taking a walk, reading a good book or snuggling with your pet. If you are concerned about an aging relative, the holidays can pose a perfect time to hold a family meeting.

Long-distance caregivers should utilize visits home for the holiday as a time to gauge parent's health. Some changes may become apparent while others raise a question. There are several signs you can look for that may indicate it's time to get medical help for your loved one.

Weight loss is one of the most obvious signs of ill health, physically or mentally. An individual may no longer have the skills or energy to prepare meals, or may not be able to read preparation instructions due to the deterioration of vision.

Poor balance is another red flag to look for. Pay close attention to your parent's moves, and in particular how they walk. A reluctance to walk could be a sign of joint or muscle problems. The

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A Message From Cheryl Robinson

It's that time of year again – time for holidays, family gatherings and perhaps a review of what we have accomplished or lived through during the year.

Hopefully by now we have incorporated a few new techniques for managing stress. Have we practiced delegating tasks to others? Have we been able to say "no" (without feeling guilty) to things we just cannot manage? Have we practiced some mindful meditation? And are we pacing ourselves as we accept the fact that we cannot do everything and be everything to everyone?



The holidays are also a time for family gatherings for some of us. It is when siblings come to visit from out of town. It is a time of observation and seeing the changes that have occurred since the last visit. It often becomes a time of family discussions about what is being done, not being done and what needs to be done.

In this issue we provide some tips on holding a family meeting. The family meeting format can lend a structure to these discussions. It can direct the flow of information with a focus on the family mission or goal of planning for safety and care. It provides for honoring the dignity, rights and needs for all involved. Family meetings can help direct the gathering of information regarding resources and options for care which may include strengthening the team perhaps with non-medical home care or other supports.

This time of year is also important for reviewing health insurance and being aware of options in the marketplace. For those with traditional Medicare, no change may be needed. For others it is a time to review individual needs and find the best plan to meet those projected healthcare costs as Sam Boone discusses.

Thank you again for being a part of this journey. Some last thoughts as we wrap up. Remember that kindness counts, what we do everyday matters, and we are all in this journey to-

gether. Hope your holiday season is peaceful and filled with meaningful moments.

Cheryl Robinson, LCSW

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risk of falling is a serious issue that increases with age, which is why it is important to take measures of prevention.

Emotional well-being and the home environment are both indications of shifting health. Withdrawal from activities, lack of interest in hobbies and inattention to personal hygiene are signs of depression. A cluttered home and unusual living

habits, such as spoiled food in the refrigerator, can also be warning signs.

The holidays are a time to celebrate and enjoy quality time with family, but it is important to take action if you see serious changes in your parent's health. Making the most of your visit will ensure your loved one continues to live safely and happily.

Family Meetings

Visits with loved ones over the holidays can provide caregiver family members an opportunity to address potential changes in the plan of care. One way to do this is to call a family meeting. These meetings task us with collaboration, communication and coordination. They help us to focus on the immediate care needs as well as short and long term care goals. They provide a structure for identifying and problem solving care needs. There is a focus on shared responsibility.

Here are some tips for holding a successful family meeting:

- It can be helpful to establish a mission statement such as: we are getting together to share ideas and identify resources to help mom/dad have the care they need and deserve as they continue to age.

- Preparing for the meeting:

All family members should prepare a list of 3 or 4 concerns

Identify the family spokesperson or hire a moderator or Geriatric Care Manager if needed.

Limit participants to 5 or 6 family members if possible

Prepare a short agenda and stick to this

Collect and share background information

- Holding the Meeting:

Stick to the agenda

Take turns

Use "I" statements

Use a timer if needed

Be respectful of each member

Keep the mission in mind

- Follow Up:

Set the agenda for the next meeting

Make assignments

Keep in touch via emails or regular mail

Schedule a follow up

*Decide when to include the loved one in the process-

Holding a family meeting may feel awkward in the beginning. Good communication and respect for each participant is essential.

From the Desk of Sam W. Boone, Jr.:

Medicare Advantage

By Sam Boone

Editor's Note: This is part of a series of columns that will be presented in this newsletter by Sam W. Boone, Jr., a local attorney whose primary practice areas include elder law, estate planning, probate and trust administration. It is hoped that the information will be valuable for caregivers and family members dealing with issues related to elder law.

Medicare beneficiaries who want to change their prescription drug plan or Medicare Advantage plan for 2015 can do just that until Dec. 7. The Annual Coordinated Election Period (ACEP) allows you to update or change your current respective plans. This includes Part D prescription drug plans and Part C Medicare Advantage plans.

Throughout this open enrollment process, you can either enroll in a Medicare Prescription Drug (Part D) Plan or adjust your current one. Additionally, beneficiaries enrolled in a Medicare Advantage (Part C) plan can revert back to traditional Medicare or change their existing plan. Those without a Medicare Advantage plan can enroll during the ACEP, and any changes made before Dec. 7 are effective Jan. 1, 2015.

Even if you are satisfied with your current plans, everyone with Medicare should review their options for the coming year. Part D and Part C plans may have changed various features like coverage or provider networks. You can visit the Medicare Plan Finder at www.medicare.gov for complete information on 2015 plans.

The Medicare Plan Finder, a tool also available at www.medicare.gov, is a helpful online tool for the tech-savvy. It's the most efficient and useful tool available for selecting the plan best for you. The Medicare Plan Finder compares all plan options once a user enters their individual drugs and specific dosages and saves this information in

case it is needed later. You can also use the finder to enroll in a program once you've browsed the best options for you.

There are several other resources available for evaluating and selecting the Part C and D plans. People without Internet access can contact 1-800-MEDICARE or their State Health Insurance Program for assistance.



Different programs and plans have coverage that overlap. If your current Medicare Advantage Plan covers prescription drugs and you join a Part D program, you could be withdrawn from your program and returned to Original Medicare.

Beneficiaries should make sure to utilize the above tools and resources, as well as expert consultants, to make sure they are maximizing their Medicare program or programs. You must also be sure to review any changes you are considering with your current provider to ensure coverage under the new plan.

It is important to prioritize enrolling in the right plan as soon as possible. Adjusting your current plans or enrolling in new ones should not be put off, since missing the Dec. 7 deadline could result in lack of coverage and/or a financial penalty.

Sam W. Boone, Jr. is a Gainesville-based attorney practicing elder law and estate planning. He is past-president of the Academy of Florida Elder Law Attorneys. To learn more about elder-law issues, go online to [www. http://boonelaw.com](http://www.boonelaw.com), or call (352)-374-8308.

Improving Caregiver Vision

By Tom Rinkoski

When you become a caregiver you need to get your eyes checked – regularly! Caregiving is a crash course in sensory experience. In our immersion into the caregiver career, we are subject to new smells, tastes, touch, sounds and certainly new sights; not all of which are appealing or desired. Tumbling into the caregiving journey may well begin with energy, but sinks into exhaustion from such sensory overload. While our person is seeing the world with crossed wires, we are being asked to fine tune our sensory inputs.

“You can observe a lot by watching.” Yogi Berra

As caregivers, we need to carefully watch what is happening as we go from somewhere to somewhere else. It is vitally important to pay special attention to patterns of behavior, the ways in which our persons use their body, and the manner of their communication (not just speaking!). The stuff of what we observe becomes vital information for meaningful diagnosis by medical professionals. Personally, I learned to keep a journal because there was so much to note, and my own mind was significantly cluttered by the ordinary of life. It helped me not only to keep accurate notes, but to sift through and shake out priorities.

Our brains do a marvelous job of screening inputs, so that in the ordinary time we do not have to deal with what we commonly regard as trivia. Most of us are extraordinarily capable of screening out sensory inputs that distract us from our goals. Now, as caregivers we have to recalibrate our sensory intake mechanisms to not let things fly by us. We need a crash course in learning to once again bring intention to attention. I am currently reading a book named *On Looking* by Alexandra Horowitz which is a social commentary on that same loss of quality in human observation.

In Savvy Caregiver Training, we work hard trying to instill in our caregivers a “clinical” detachment that fosters quality attention to environments and stimuli that affect our persons and their behaviors. This is difficult precious because we

are intimately tied to our person in bonds of affection that make it easy to “overlook” deviations from the norm, or what we are sure are minor discrepancies. In addition, it is difficult to learn to see again with fresh and open senses because our brains have worked so amazingly hard otherwise. It requires practice, practice and more practice. I do not win kind regard when I give out “homework” at Savvy Training, even though my goal is to motivate caregivers to engage in the tough work of recalibrating their senses.

Try your own experiment. For two hours today, carefully observe, what your person is doing; add up the various elements in their environment, watch their capabilities as carefully as you do their disability and then consider how these circumstances combine to produce the behavior they are doing. This is not some new calculus; it is simply the fine art of observation that is elemental to effective caregiving.

You are welcome to contact me with further questions. You are invited to join a Savvy Caregiver Training. Check us out at www.agingresources.org or on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/SavvyCaregiverNorthCentralFlorida>.

www.skipeveritt.com

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Calendar of Events

Becoming a Savvy Caregiver

Savvy Caregiver Training is a free six-week training course for persons who are caring for family members and friends with dementia and/or Alzheimer's Disease. Here is a list of Savvy Caregiver Training and their start dates in the Gainesville area in 2015.

Thursdays: 1–3 pm, beginning Feb. 5, Alachua County Health Department

Thursdays: 1–3 pm, beginning April 7, Alachua Library

Thursdays: 1–3 pm, beginning June 4, Alachua County Health Department

Register by calling Tom Rinkoski at (352) 378-6649, extension 126, or via e-mail to rinkoskit@agin-gresources.org.

Community Coalition for Older Adults

Second Friday of the month, Senior Recreation Center, 5701 NW 34 St. Contact Shirley Bloodworth at sgblood@bellsouth.net for information.

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We also have a Facebook page. Check it out at www.facebook.com/CaregiverChronicle.
Like the page to get notices about events and activities between our print issues.

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Useful Resources

Alzheimer's Association – www.alz.org/cnfl/index.asp

Elder Affairs – www.elderaffairs.state.fl.us/index.php

Comparing health plans, nursing homes, etc. – www.floridahealthfinder.gov

SHINE (Serving Health Insurance Needs of Elders) www.floridashine.org

Medicare – www.medicare.org

State of Florida – www.myflorida.com

National Institute on Aging (free publications) – www.nig.nih.gov

Caregiving – www.parentgiving.com

Respite locator – www.respitelocator.org

Caregiving – www.rosalynncarter.org

Driving – www.thehartford.com/talkwitholderdrivers/driversatrisk.htm

United Way – Alachua, Bradford & Putnam counties – www.unitedwayncfl.org

National Association of Professional Geriatric Care Management - www.caremanager.org

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Featuring



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Private Duty Care-A Little Help Can Go a Long Way

By Sally Dahlem

Many seniors want to remain in their own home. Seniors can be in a variety of different situations. Some have spouses that can help them, some have family nearby, some have friends/neighbors to help and some have no local family. Private-duty home care can enhance all these situations.

If one spouse is taking care of the other one it is very important that the caregiving spouse have time to themselves. So often it is the healthier one that ends up getting sick or hurt before the spouse that is receiving the assistance. Home by Choice can provide visits so that the caregiving spouse can go to the store, enjoy time with their friends and even go to the doctor without worrying if their spouse is being taken care of at home. Seniors that have family in the area often rely on them to take care of all their needs such as shopping, medication reminders, transportation, etc.

Even though the family is more than willing to do this Home by Choice can help by filling in a

few days a week so that the family can take care of their own needs. Some of the services that Home by Choice caregivers can do include light house-keeping laundry, and meal preparation. Friends and neighbors can be a great resource but they have their own lives. Even if they are volunteering to provide assistance, who is the back up if they cannot make it? Their intentions may be good but they go on vacation, work and have their own families. Seniors that have no local families often slip thru the cracks. When families call they cannot get a real picture of how their family member is doing. The senior may say that they are eating, taking their medications and going to appointments but are they really doing it? By having Home by Choice providing assistance with these tasks you know they are being done.

As you can see having a private home care agency such as Home by Choice is a great option to moving a senior out of their home or separating spouses. Visits can be done for as little as four hours up to 24 hours/7 days a week.

Our Caregivers Are Always There For You!



John Markham and Sally Dahlem
Owner/Operators with more than 30 years of combined experience in homecare, assisted living administration, skilled nursing facility admissions, case management and medical equipment sales.

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Meal Preparation / Eating	

Call us about your free in home consultation and complimentary visit.
352-376-4024 <http://www.homebychoice.com>
HHA#299993307

Caregiver Support Groups

Alz Place/Harbor Chase
3rd Thursday of the month at 9am
Open to all caregivers
Contact Robyn at 352-375-3000 for address

Alterra Clare Bridge
3rd Thursday of the month- 6pm
4607 NW 53rd Ave, Gainesville, FL 32653
Contact Gail at 376-5151

The Cancer Center at NFRMC
Heart of Healing Support Group/Meditation
Tuesdays 12-12:30pm
Call Joanie at 386-853-0162

Community Cancer Center
Living With Cancer Supports
www.ccnf.com for more information

Community Cancer Center
Lake City Support Group
2nd Wednesday every month 11am - 1pm
4520 W.US Hwy. 90, Lake City, FL 32055
For more information call 386-755-0601

Haven Hospice
Bereavement Supports
Call 692-5123 for more information

Hospice of the Nature Coast
Wings Community Education Center
Grief Support Group- High Springs
Call 386-454-1338 for more information

Lake Area Caregiver Support Group
4th Tuesday of the month from 1-2:00pm
Trinity Episcopal Church
204 SR 26, Melrose, FL 32666
Call 352-475-3792 for more information

Park of the Palms
2nd Monday at 2pm in the Library
Contact: Gail Haynes RNC - 352-246-5601

Park Meadows Health and Rehab Center
3250 SW 41 Pl, GV
Call the Alz Helpline at 1-800-272-3900 for
more information

Senior Healthcare Center at Springhill
3rd Tuesday of the month- 2:30-4:00pm
3720 NW 83rd Street, Gainesville, FL 32606
Contact Flory at 336-3050

NF Mind Matters Stroke Support Group
4th Thursday of the month from 1-2 pm
South Tower, 4th floor Conference Room-
NFRMC
Call 1-800-611-6913 for more information

The Village
(for Village residents only)
2nd Monday of the month from 1-2:30 pm
8000 NW 27th Blvd., Gainesville, FL 32606
Call 872-5332 for more information

United Church of Gainesville
1624 NW 5th Ave, GV
3rd Tuesday of the month from 7-8pm
Open to all caregivers
Contact Lynda at 352-219-3023

VA Caregiver Support
Mon-Fri- 8am- 11pm, Sat. 10:30-6pm
Call 1-855-260-3274