

CAREGIVER CHRONICLE

Connections for Caregivers

Every Day is Caregiver Stress-Awareness and Care Day

By Leilani Doty, PhD

Caregiver stress is a major issue. As many as 5.7 million people have Alzheimer's or a related dementia and 16.1 million Americans provide 18.4 billion hours of unpaid care for them, according to the Alzheimer's Association. These dedicated caregivers must take care of themselves to avoid the consequences, such as stroke, heart attacks or collapse, that may occur from mounting caregiver stress.

Every day should be Caregiver Stress-Awareness and Care Day. Signs of caregiver stress include: anger outbursts, lack of focus, social withdrawal, sleeplessness, depression, anxiety, memory problems, exhaustion, increased risk of infections and health breakdowns.

To develop stress-awareness caregivers should look daily in the mirror to see if the person facing them is tense, frowning, exhausted, etc. Seeing a weary face should be a strong signal for the caregiver to spend 5-10 minutes sometime that day to address stress and also to schedule a couple of hours of indulgence that week or sometime soon to address stress.

Indulgence means some fun, safe activity or non-activity (doing nothing) to care for you. An activity to clean the car, fix a

closet, read information to make you a better caregiver or do a favor to help a friend does not count. Indulgence is time for only YOU. Regular safe, healthy indulgence is critical to reduce stress and keep up caregiver health.

Caregivers must:

1. Take care of your body. With you every day, everywhere, your body deserves: healthy diet and water intake, regular physical exercise (walk or bike 30 minutes daily, 5 days a week), continued management of health conditions (i.e., high blood pressure, diabetes, asthma, stomach pains, sleep apnea, etc.), routine medical and dental check-ups, good social activities, alone time to unwind, etc.

2. Take a few deep breaths and focus on right now: the activity, the time together, the smile of your loved one; the fragrance of fresh air, soap or after-shave lotion; your pet, etc.

3. Concentrate on the positive. Move quickly from a harsh word (to or from you) to a positive phrase. Relax your face, smile, talk about a cute family story, or sing a song you both know and love.

4. Connect to others (related or surrogate family, neighbors, friends, spiritual community) and health care resources (adult day health care, respite weekends at facilities, free educational pro-

grams and support group). Share the care!

5. Learn and plan ahead. Learn about the diagnosis, what to expect, what may happen. List health team and helpers. Plan ahead to organize financial and legal matters, back-up plans for weather crises or health emergencies (for you or your loved one).

The caregiver who provides care 24/7 and ignores personal stress, failing health or exhaustion may end up in a sudden health crisis, such as a stroke, heart attack or fractures from a fall, that may result in a permanent disability and thus unable to continue caregiving. Such a crisis can and does happen; it throws the household and extended family into chaos. Reduce the possibility by making every day a Caregiver Stress-Awareness and Care Day!

Leilani Doty, PhD, is the Associate Director of Programs, Gainesville Office of the Central & North FL Chapter, Alzheimer's Association. More information about caregiver stress is at www.alz.org. Dr. Doty is available to do educational programs and Care Consults (talk, listen and support sessions in-person or by phone) at no charge; contact at Ledoty@alz.org.

Savvy Caregiver Training

Savvy Caregiver Training is a multi-session training dedicated to people who care for family members and friends with dementias (like Alzheimer's). Our goal is to reduce caregiver stress by offering easy-to-understand information about progressive dementias, related medicines, and diagnostic tools. In the program we help caregivers build skills on relating to persons of dementia when they behave in ways that baffle, embarrass or irritate you and others.

Here is a sampling of our upcoming schedule. Choose whichever series works for your schedule and call Johnnie Jones at jonesj@agingresources.org or 352-692-5277 to register.

04/03/2018	Tuesdays	1:00 – 3:00 pm	Ocala West United Methodist, Ocala
04/05/2018	Thursdays	2:00 – 4:00 pm	Cone Park Library, Gainesville
04/10/2018	Tuesdays	1:00 – 3:00 pm	Haven Hospice, Palatka
04/26/2018	Thursdays	1:30 – 3:30 pm	Bradford County Senior Center
05/08/2018	Tuesdays	1:00 – 3:00 pm	Pine Grove Baptist Church, Trenton
05/09/2018	Wednesdays	1:00 – 3:00 pm	Tri-County Nursing Home, Trenton
05/22/2018	Tuesdays	2:00 – 4:00 pm	Haven, E.T. York Center, Gainesville

More dates of upcoming Savvy Caregiver Trainings can be found at our Web Page (<http://www.agingresources.org/savvy-caregiver-for-families>). Or, go to our Facebook Page (<https://www.facebook.com/Savvy-Caregiver-Training-131134764247962>) for other information, tips and techniques about caregiving and dementia.



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

Social Security: What Can You Do Online?

By Sam W. Boone, Jr.

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.

With National Social Security Month just passing in April, this is an excellent time see how easy it is to access Social Security online. Social Security's online services make access to the agency an extremely simple process.

There are few, if any, Social Security services that you cannot access through its online portal at <https://www.ssa.gov/onlineservices>. To receive any of the available online services, you must first create your online Social security account. Once that's done, here is a sampling of the things you can now do online.

Request a replacement Social Security card. This is a relatively new online service. The first step is to create your online Social Security account. Then there are certain qualifications to receive this particular service online. You must be 18 or older and have a U.S. mailing address. You cannot request a name change or any other changes on your card. Additionally you have to have a driver's license from a specific state. Unfortunately, not all states are in the system yet but Florida is.

You can apply for Social Security benefits, obtain your statement, appeal any medical decisions and check on your appeal status, find out if you qualify for benefits and estimate future benefits.

If you receive Social Security benefits or are on Medicare, other online features include the ability to obtain a benefit verification letter, check on your benefits, change your address or phone number, start or change direct deposit or get a replacement Medicare card.

Disability benefits can be applied for using the online portal as well. Applicants can check on the process of an application or appeal any decisions on the website.

You also have the same access to checking benefits and your earnings record or obtain a benefit verification letter for Supplemental

Security Income (SSI).

If you receive no benefits from Social Security, and need a letter stating you have never received benefits, that can be obtained online as well.

The online portal also allows businesses, governments, payees and other third parties to report wages online, as well as have certain access to other business-related services.

Some people are concerned about having this information available online. You can also use the website to block electronic access to your Social Security records. Taking this step would



also prevent you from getting access to your records. If, at some point in the future, you decide to lift this blockage, simply contact Social Security by phone 1-800-772-1213, email or go to your local office.

While online access to Social Security creates convenient access

for those who receive Social Security benefits or have questions about benefits, it also raises concerns. The Social Security Administration is keenly aware of these concerns and issues.

To protect you, the agency has implemented a series of safeguards. You can learn more about these safety features by reading a posted article on Protecting Your Social Security at <https://blog.ssa.gov/protecting-your-social-security>.

There is a wealth of information on the website that should be able to answer all your questions about Social Security. But if you can't find the answers online, the site will show you how to reach the Social Security Administration by phone, email or locating the nearest office.

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 and is accredited by the Veterans Administration. To learn more about elder-law issues, go online to [www. http://boonelaw.com](http://boonelaw.com), or call (352) 374-8308.

The Benefits of Effective Home Healthcare

By Elizabeth Phillips
Professional Service Coordinator,
Carter Healthcare

Long hospital stays or institutional living are almost never a good alternative for people – even less so when those people are older. But often it is challenging to find an alternative that will work best for your older family member.

One effective alternative may be to bring in a qualified home healthcare agency. But the question at that point for family caregivers is how to know who is qualified.

There are some things to look for when trying to determine what agency you want to bring in to help care for your loved one.

First, look for a Medicare-certified, Joint Commission-accredited home healthcare agency that can provide safe, in-home medical care in the local community.

Home healthcare is an alternative to prolonged and costly hospital stays and institutional living. At home, people are more likely to recover quickly due to the comfort of being in a familiar environment. Services provided are Skilled Nursing, Physical, Occupational and Speech Therapies.

Each patient's program should be tailored to his or her personal medical history and current situation. Resources leading to positive outcomes include:

- a comprehensive re-hospitalization prevention plan;
- a heightened level of clinical oversight during critical post-hospitalization days;
- advanced wound management using certified wound care specialists; and
- routine maintenance checks through the Continued Wellness Program.

Diagnoses that may qualify for home healthcare include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Cardiovascular issues, such as angina and congestive heart failure
- Diabetic disorders, such as neuropathy and ulcers
- Gastrointestinal issues, such as diverticulitis and GERD
- Neurological conditions, such as ALS and Parkinson's
- Oncological issues, such as anemia and malnutrition
- Orthopedic/muscular issues, such as fractures and lower extremity weakness
- Respiratory issues, such as COPD and pneumonia
- Urological conditions, such as incontinence and UTI.

Carter Healthcare is a leading healthcare provider focused on delivering outcomes-based results and the highest quality of Home-Health Services to thousands of clients in the comfort of their homes. Physician referral is required to initiate services with Carter Healthcare. To learn more, call (888) 951-1112 or go online to <https://carterhealthcare.com/>

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Providing Home Health Services Since 1989

Knowing Reduces Stress

By Johnnie Jones III

How stressful would it be to sit in a horrific traffic jam for hours while watching the clock tick past scheduled appointments and feeling the pressure of knowing that your already frenzied life is only becoming more chaotic because of your unplanned and unexplained delay? “What’s the hold-up?” “How much longer will it be?” “Is there anything that I can do to get out of this?”

These are just a few of the questions that you might ask yourself in that situation. Nothing feels worse than not knowing and not being able to do anything about it.

Now imagine having heard the traffic bulletin on the morning news before leaving home on that same route and time. The situation is explained, and the delay is projected. You are comforted because, although you have no choice but to take this route, you know what to expect.

I use this scenario to illustrate how stressful caring for a person with dementia can feel when there is no training, coaching, guidance or support. The journey will, undoubtedly be long, stressful and fraught with problems, but the empowerment that

comes with knowledge makes it much more bearable. Those caught in that same unexpected traffic jam that a dementia diagnosis creates will either react with the calm that knowledge and preparation affords or the frustration that traveling uninformed will cause.

If dementia is that hectic road, then the evidence-based Savvy Caregiver Training Program offered through Elder Options, is the calming and reassuring traffic bulletin that helps you make adjustments and then patiently travel your hard road better equipped than those who have no idea what is ahead. Savvy Caregiver increases knowledge and skills and changes your outlook. It is proven to reduce stress for caregivers. Savvy means knowing, and quite simply, knowing can lower your stress.

Johnnie Jones III is the Caregiver Support Coordinator for Elder Options/Savvy Caregiver Training Program. Upcoming trainings and other information can be found at www.agingresources.org/savvy-caregiver-for-families, or on Facebook at www.facebook.com/Savvy-Caregiver-Training-131134764247962.

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Rightsizing – Tips for Stress-Free Decluttering

By Ruth Brunner

Most senior adults know that, at some point, they will have to do some amount of downsizing. When you are ready, there are a few ways to make it less stressful.

1. Take your time. Don't try to go through your entire house in one weekend. Spread the project over a few weeks. Go one room at a time perhaps starting in one corner and working yourself out of the room in an organized way. Rushing only adds to the stress.

2. Start with duplicates. In many rooms, like the kitchen, there are duplicated items. This is an easy place to start de-cluttering. Do you really need two choppers? How about four spatulas? Consider donating these items to a worthy cause or a family member.

3. Speaking of family members, consider giving them those family heirlooms early. The dishes you were saving for your daughter, the collection that your son wants – gift those now and enjoy their

happiness.

4. Make downsizing a family affair. Invite your children and grandchildren over to help. You don't have to do this alone.

Change can be hard, and we are all very attached to our belongings. Embrace this change as a new-found freedom. Freedom from clutter. Freedom from fewer items to clean or dust. Freedom from tripping hazards. Freedom from worry.

There are also companies that can help you with downsizing and decluttering. If it is a job you don't want to tackle, consider asking a friend or senior center for recommendations.

Ruth Brunner is the Sales Director for The Windsor of Gainesville. She has worked in the senior care market for the past decade and currently serves on the Board of Directors for ElderCare of Alachua County.

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10 Locations Throughout Florida!

Caregiver Support Groups

Al'z Place
3rd Thursday of the month at 9am
Open to all caregivers
1610 NW 23rd Ave., Gainesville
Contact Nancy at 352-265-9200

Alzheimer's Association
Caregiver Support Group
2nd Thursday of each month - 1:30 p.m.
Edward Jones conference room,
220 North Main Street, Suite 2, Chiefland
Contact Kathryn at 352-493-4949

Cancer Center at NFRMC
Breast Cancer Support Group
2nd Tuesday of the month - 6pm - 7:30 pm
Call Susie at 352-213-5890

Community Cancer Center
Living With Cancer Supports
www.cccnf.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

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.

Haven Hospice
Bereavement Supports
Call 692-5123 for more information

Hospice of Marion County
Transitions Caregiver Support Group
Usually the 2nd Tuesday of each month 11am - 1 pm
The Elliott Center, 3231 SW 34th Ave. Ocala
Call for information 352-854-5200

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 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 Thursday of the month from 1:30-3 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 caregivers of persons with dementia
Contact Lynda at 352-219-3023

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

Useful Resources

Seniors vs. Crime: www.seniorsvscrime.com
Alzheimer's Association – www.alz.org/cnfl/index.asp
Doggie Styles: Mobile Pet Grooming – www.doggiestyles.org
Elder Affairs – www.elderaffairs.state.fl.us/index.php
Elder Helpline – 1-800-963-5337, options@agingresources.org
Elder Options – Savvy Caregiver Classes –
www.agingresources.org
Florida Silver Alert – www.floridasilveralert.com
SHINE (Serving Health Insurance Needs of Elders)
www.floridashine.org
Driving – www.independencedrive.php.ufl.edu
Medicare – www.medicare.org
State of Florida – www.myflorida.com
National Institute on Aging (free publications) – www.nig.nih.gov
United Way – Alachua, Bradford & Putnam counties –
www.unitedwaycnfl.org
National Association of Professional Geriatric Care Management
– www.caremanager.org
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs – www.va.gov



Annual Alzheimer's And Related Disorders Caregiver Workshop

Thursday, May 17
9 a.m. – 3 p.m.
Senior Recreation Center
5701 NW 34th St.
RSVP to Nancy Lewis (352)265-9200
Or lewna@shands.ufl.edu