

# Caregiver Chronicles

December 2016



AREA AGENCY ON AGING OF DANE COUNTY  
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608-261-9930  
[HTTPS://AAA.DCDHS.COM/](https://aaa.dcdhs.com/)



Photo by Tiffany Scully

*Holidays are all  
different depending on  
the company and time  
of your life.*

*—Dominic Monaghan*

### Keep Self Care at the Top of Your List

While looking for good information on self care for caregivers during the holiday season, I came across a piece written by Amy Goyer for AARP in 2013. (You can access the full article here: <http://bit.ly/1fkbLs6>.) I've highlighted some of her useful suggestions for caregivers in the following:

Caregivers are often operating on a thin margin and the holidays have the potential to increase stress levels. It can be tempting to fall into unhealthy behaviors to try and cope – drinking more alcohol, overeating, exercising less and missing out on sleep. It's a slippery slope that can take us to a place where the holidays are more challenging than they need to be. You can keep self-care at the top of your list with a little reflection and some planning and preparation. Doing so will open your experience of the season to more joy and help you avoid magnifying stress.

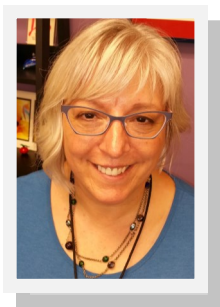
**Reflect:** Take some time to note the holiday activities or toxic people that trigger stress. Acknowledge any grief or loss you may be feeling. Anticipate topics that might be best avoided. Also, be sure to consider the people and activities that mean the most to you during the holidays remembering what brings you joy and warms your heart.

**Plan:** Armed with insights from your reflection, look for ways to avoid or limit exposure to the people, places, and events that cause stress. Make time in your schedule for the best of the season and look for opportunities to engage in activities that help you minimize stress

**Prepare:** Ask for help from family and friends and turn over tasks others can do. Schedule nurturing activities to stay calm and rested as you can. Accomplish something each day when possible to avoid marathons of frantic activity. Simplify and streamline wherever possible.

When you are able to let go of unrealistic expectations and be present for the moments of joy, you will be able to focus on what's important to you and those you love during the holidays. If you have a better holiday, those you care for will have a better holiday, too.

Wishing everyone peace, love, and joy this holiday season.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jane De Broux".

Jane De Broux  
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## Reducing Caregiver Stress: Adjust Expectations and Prepare in Advance

Along with the holidays come family gatherings, parties, teas, concerts, shopping, presents, decorations, greeting cards, and the list goes on. Many people look forward to the hustle and bustle, reconnecting with family and friends and the snowy magic of the holiday season. Others, however, anticipate the season as a time of stress, chaos, and sadness.

People who have experienced changes due to Alzheimer's, stroke, or other medical conditions may feel a great deal of loss during the holidays. Those who are caring for these loved ones may feel overwhelmed by trying to keep up holiday traditions while continuing to provide care. They may also be uncertain about gathering with friends and family for fear the changes in physical health, behavior, and personality may make others uncomfortable.

If you are someone who is experiencing anxiety over the upcoming holiday season it is important to realize that these feelings are normal. Here are some ideas to help reduce stress this holiday.

***Adjust your expectations.*** You may not be able to do everything you've always done in the past. Talk with your loved ones and choose a few activities that are the most important. For those with dementia, traditions from the past are more likely to have meaning than newer ideas.

***Ask for help in meeting your goal.*** Involve other family members or friends in cooking, baking, decorating, shopping, or sending cards. Not only does this reduce your stress, it also provides you and your loved one with opportunities to connect and socialize. Write down tasks that need to be completed so you can be specific when people offer to help. Remember, not everything on the list must be completed.

***Prepare family and friends before getting together.*** Let them know in advance about changes in their loved one's disease or condition. Give them ideas on how to communicate with them most effectively and what they can expect.

***Involve the person you care for in activities.*** They may be able to assist in preparing food, wrapping gifts, or decorating. Just being able to be near and watch the preparations can help make them feel a part of the festivities and provide more quality time together.

***Offer suggestions about gifts.*** Give friends and family ideas for useful gifts they can purchase for their loved one such as music CDs, photo albums, comfortable clothing, videos, or audio books. Don't forget your own wishes, too! Gift certificates for dining, laundry, or cleaning services are some ideas. Be sure to let them know what might make it easier for you to continue providing quality care to your loved one in common.

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**Keep the needs of your loved one in mind.** For those dealing with memory loss, remember that distant memory stays intact the longest so plan activities accordingly, and avoid introducing new games or activities. Some victims of stroke have lost the ability to feed themselves and may find it uncomfortable to eat in front of guests. Perhaps an afternoon of looking at old slides or photos and reminiscing would be more appropriate than sharing a meal. Schedule gatherings for times when your loved one feels best and is most able to participate.

**Be good to yourself.** Be aware that the holidays can be stressful and prioritize time to get away. Lunch out with friends, a trip to the hair salon, or going to a movie or concert are simple things that can leave you feeling rejuvenated and better able to have a happy holiday.

Wishing everyone a low stress holiday season filled with love, joy, and good memories!

—Jane Mahoney, Older Americans Act Consultant  
GWAAR



### The Aging and Disability Resource Center of Dane County (ADRC)

The ADRC offers free, unbiased information and assistance on resources and services for older people and adults with disabilities. Staff provides information to all callers regardless of their income, assets, age, or disability, and they help callers identify options, solve problems, and plan for the future.

**Open 7:45 am—4:30 pm Monday through Friday**

**Call** (608) 240-7400

**Visit** the ADRC office, 2865 N. Sherman Ave,  
Madison

*Appointments are not necessary*

**Website:** [www.daneadrc.org](http://www.daneadrc.org)

**Email:** [ADRC@countyofdane.com](mailto:ADRC@countyofdane.com)

## Online Resources

### When Should You Worry if You Are Caregiving the Right Way?

Understand what your loved one needs and what you do by Eileen Beal, *nextavenue*, November 14, 2016

Link: <http://bit.ly/2f0kB8a>

“Caregiving isn’t a job with a yearly review that tells you how you are doing. It’s a care dyad, an interdependent situation involving two unique individuals who usually have conflicting wants, needs, and ideas about what caregiving and care should be.”

### Older Driver Safety Awareness Week: Dec. 5—9, 2016

The American Occupational Therapy Association Inc.

Link: <http://bit.ly/1PNzUdC>

Is the older adult loved one in your life still a driver? Want to learn more about how to keep them safe and independent as long as possible? Looking for resources? Excellent information on a variety of useful topics including: Anticipating Changes That Can Affect Driving; Family Conversations; Interventions That Can Empower Drivers; and more.

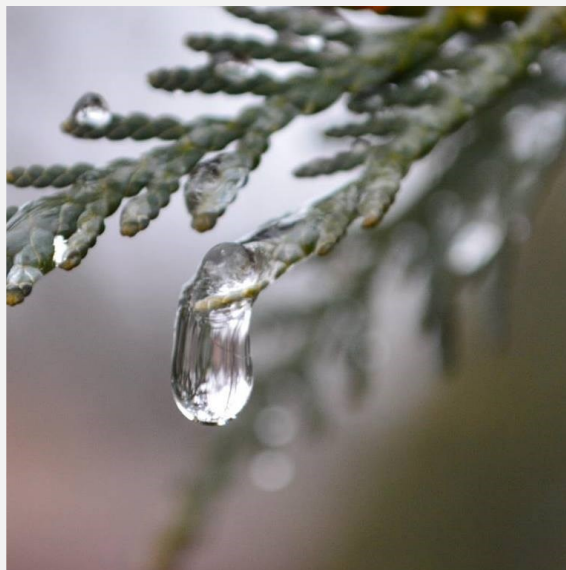


Photo by John Zimm

## Cancelation

The Adult Children & Employed Caregivers Learn & Support Group Meeting scheduled for December 8th at the Aging & Disability Resource Center of Dane County is canceled.



### Dementia-specific Information

#### Preparing Holiday Guests for Their Visit

Explain to guests that the person with Alzheimer's or dementia does not always remember what is expected and acceptable. Give examples of unusual behaviors that may take place such as incontinence, eating food with fingers, wandering, or hallucinations.

If this is the first visit since the person with Alzheimer's became severely impaired, tell guests that the visit may be painful. The memory-impaired person may not remember guests' names or relationships but can still enjoy their company.

Explain that memory loss is the result of the disease and is not intentional.

Stress that the meaningfulness of the moment together matters more than what the person remembers.

This holiday tip is from the Alzheimer's Disease Education and Referral (ADEAR) Center, a service of the National Institute on Aging, part of the National Institutes on Health. The Center offers Information and publications for families, Caregivers, and professionals about Alzheimer's disease and age-related cognitive changes.

Learn more at: <https://www.nia.nih.gov/alzheimers>



## Caregivers, Have You Checked Out What Your Local Senior Center or Coalition Has to Offer?

Dane County has 15 “Senior Focal Points” that provide a wide variety of activities and services for older adults. If you are a family caregiver, or if you’re age 60+ yourself, you may be surprised to learn about the range of opportunities for engagement, socializing, learning, fitness, and fun! Many offer events to their communities appropriate for all ages, from holiday meals and caroling, to plays, art exhibits, festivals, movies, and teas.

Connect with the center near you or near your loved ones and see what they have to offer. Subscribe to their newsletters (available online) and check out their websites so you know when activities of interest are coming.

You may also find resources for those you are for in the form of support groups, memory cafes, foot care clinics, loan closets for medical equipment, and a variety of broad supports and services offered in the local community.

### Senior Focal Points by Area

Case Management services are offered by 15 Senior Focal Points in Dane County. Contact the Focal Point in your area for more information.

<b>Area Agency on Aging</b> .....	261-9930
<i>(Dane County)</i>	
<b>Colonial Club Senior Activity Center</b> .....	837-4611
<i>(Bristol, Burke, Cottage Grove, Deerfield, Marshall, Medina, Sun Prairie, York)</i>	
<b>DeForest Area Community &amp; Senior Center</b> ....	846-9469
<i>(DeForest, Vienna, Windsor)</i>	
<b>East Madison/Monona Coalition</b> .....	223-3100
<i>(Blooming Grove, Burke, Madison, Monona)</i>	
<b>Fitchburg Senior Center</b> .....	270-4290
<i>(Fitchburg)</i>	
<b>McFarland Senior Outreach Services</b> .....	838-7117
<i>(Cambridge, Christiana, Dunn, McFarland, Pleasant Springs, Rockdale, Rutland)</i>	
<b>Middleton Senior Center</b> .....	831-2373
<i>(Middleton)</i>	
<b>North/Eastside Senior Coalition</b> .....	243-5252
<i>(Madison, Maple Bluff)</i>	
<b>Northwest Dane Senior Services</b> .....	798-6937
<i>(Berry, Black Earth, Cross Plains, Mazomanie, Roxbury, Vermont)</i>	
<b>Oregon Area Senior Center</b> .....	835-5801
<i>(Brooklyn, Oregon, Rutland)</i>	
<b>South Madison Coalition of the Elderly</b> ...	251-8405
<i>(Madison)</i>	
<b>Southwest Dane Senior Outreach</b> .....	437-6902
<i>(Blue Mounds, Mt Horeb, Perry, Primrose, Springdale)</i>	
<b>Stoughton Area Senior Center</b> .....	873-8585
<i>(Albion, Dunkirk, Stoughton)</i>	
<b>Sugar River Senior Center</b> .....	424-6007
<i>(Belleville, Montrose, Verona)</i>	
<b>Waunakee Senior Center</b> .....	849-8385
<i>(Dane, Springfield, Vienna, Waunakee, Westport)</i>	
<b>West Madison Senior Coalition</b> .....	238-7368
<i>(Madison)</i>	

**Aging & Disability Resource Center**..... 240-7400  
For information & assistance help—not case management



# Caring for the Caregiver Program

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## Save paper and reduce postage costs

Please let us know if:

- You are willing to receive the newsletter via email
- You are no longer interested in receiving the newsletter

Contact:

Jane De Broux

608-261-5679

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