

Caregiver Chronicles

December 2018



Caring for Caregivers

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



If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion. — Dalai Lama

Wishing You Peace During the Holidays

Love them or hate them, holidays can be overwhelming. There are opportunities to gather with loved ones far and near, and heightened emotion coupled with high expectations can be a recipe for more stress than joy. If you are a caregiver you may have more than usual on your plate, so it is important to carve out time for self-care and self-care begins with compassion for ourselves and for others.

Planning for the best possible outcomes also helps to reduce stress. Jane Mahoney provides some useful tips in her article, “Reduce Your Holiday Stress” (page 3). Her suggestions will help you to set the intention for the holiday you want and to move forward with a positive approach. You can also check out this month’s *Listen to the Podcast* featured resource, “Coping with Dementia Care During the Holidays” for more tips on coping with dementia care in particular (page 4). This month’s Caregiver Teleconnection (page 5) includes a holiday-themed learning session, “Caregiving and the Holidays with Melissa Griffin.” And, on a completely different type of preparedness planning, see the “Emergency Preparedness for Older Adults and People with Disabilities” infographic (page 6).

Once you’ve put strategies in place for self-care, you’re in a good position to support other family members and friends. Holidays are often intergenerational celebrations, and children in particular may have struggles coping with changes in the health and behavior of loved ones. This is especially true when a family member has Alzheimer’s or Dementia. Author, educator, and researcher Suzanne Bottum-Jones has created an invaluable resource for helping children understand how to connect with a loved one who has dementia in her new book, *Nice to Meet You . . . Again* (page 7).

Finally, as we look forward to the New Year, I have included the link to the most recent episode of *Senior Beat*, which features Donna Bryant, a Medicare advocate, and me in a video interview on the Dane County Caregiver Program with host Christine Beatty (page 4). I enjoyed the opportunity to let more people in on what the Dane County Caregiver Program is all about.

Wishing everyone peace and joy this holiday season!



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Reduce Your Holiday Stress

It's time for the holidays once again—decorating, shopping, parties, family gatherings, presents, greeting cards—and the list goes on. While many people look forward to the hustle and bustle of the season, others see the holidays 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 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 experiencing anxiety over the upcoming holiday season it is important to realize that these feelings are normal, and you are not alone. There are ways to reduce stress during the holiday season, so take a moment to consider what you can do to better manage your life during this busy season. Here are some suggestions:

Adjust your expectations. You can't and don't have to do everything you've done in the past. Talk with your loved ones and choose a few traditions to carry out.

Ask for help. Involve other family members or friends in your holiday preparations. Not only does this reduce your stress, but it provides you and your care partner with opportunities for socialization. Write down tasks that need completing so you can be specific when people offer to help.

Prepare family and friends before getting together. Update family and friends on how your loved one has changed and what they can expect during their visit. Offer suggestions on how best to communicate.

Offer gift suggestions. Give friends and family ideas for useful gifts they can give such as music CDs, photo albums, comfortable clothing, videos, or audio books. Don't forget your own wish list! Gift certificates for dining, and laundry or cleaning services are usually much appreciated.

Keep the needs of your care partner in mind. Remember that distant memory stays intact the longest and plan activities for those with memory loss accordingly, avoiding new games or activities. Many stroke survivors lose the ability to feed themselves and may find it uncomfortable to eat in front of guests. An afternoon of looking at old slides or photos and reminiscing might be more appropriate than sharing a meal. Schedule gatherings during the day rather than in the evening since symptoms often worsen in the evening.

Be good to yourself. Make it a priority to care for yourself. Get away with friends for lunch, a movie, or a concert—it might be just what you need. Take some private time for yourself to read, journal, or enjoy a scented bath. Determine what recharges and rejuvenates you and make the time to do it.

Don't let the hustle and bustle of the holidays add anxiety to your life! Find ways to simplify and enjoy a holiday season filled with love, joy and good memories!

—Jane Mahoney
Older Americans Act Consultant
Greater Wisconsin Agency on Aging Resources



Online Resources

Listen to the Podcast

[Coping with Dementia Care During the Holidays](#)

<http://www.blogtalkradio.com/caregiving/2018/11/27/coping-with-dementia-care-during-the-holidays>

Denise Brown, Caregiving Podcast Network, posted on 11/27/18

“Claire E. Day, Chief Program officer for the Alzheimer’s Association Northern California and Northern Nevada Chapter, joins us to share tips on coping with dementia care during the holidays.”

Senior Beat: Caregiving and Medicare

<http://www.cityofmadison.com/citychannel/shows/seniorbeat/>

“In this episode of Senior Beat, we speak with Jane De Broux and Donna Bryant. Jane De Broux, with Area Agency on Aging of Dane County, tells us about the complex nature of caregiving, how it is changing, and resources available to caregivers. In our second segment, Donna Bryant, a Medicare advocate, helps us navigate the complex Medicare system.”



Connecting People with the Assistance They Need

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

Call (608) 240-7400

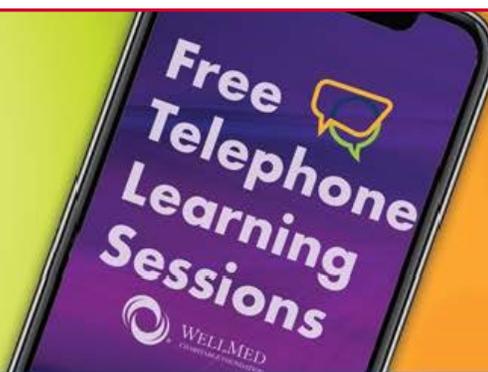
Visit the ADRC office:
2865 N. Sherman Ave., Madison

Website: www.daneadrc.org



CAREGIVER TELECONNECTION

www.caregiverteleconnection.org



Date	Time	Topic	A LEADING VOICE FOR CAREGIVERS
Monday, December 3rd	Eastern 1:00 pm Central 12:00 pm Mountain 11:00 am Pacific 10:00 am	Caregiving and the Holidays with Melissa Griffin	<i>Explore the unique challenges of caregiving and the holidays. What traditions may need to change? Learn tips to cope with the stress of balancing caregiving and self-care. **Sponsored by the North Central Texas Caregiver Teleconnection</i>
Tuesday, December 4th	Eastern 1:00 pm Central 12:00 pm Mountain 11:00 am Pacific 10:00 am	Home Safety with Lakelyn Hogan	<i>If you're worried about the safety of your aging loved one who is living at home, it could be for good reason. Home safety issues and falls are among the leading causes of injury at home. There are common hazards and warning signs that family members can look out for. The good news is, simple modifications can go a long way in reducing the risk of accidents and can create a more age friendly environment.</i>
Thursday, December 13th	Eastern 11:00 am Central 10:00 am Mountain 9:00 am Pacific 8:00 am	Lucy Barylak, MSW as "Dear Lucy"	<i>Lucy Barylak, MSW as "Dear Lucy". This is an interactive session where Dear Lucy will answer questions and have a conversation with caregivers regarding the issues they face in their caregiving journey.</i>
Tuesday, December 18th	Eastern 12:00 pm Central 11:00 am Mountain 10:00 am Pacific 9:00 am	Music and Memory with Candice Slusher, LVN	<i>The life of a family caregiver seems almost unbearable, and many times the health of the caregiver suffers greatly, to the detriment of the care recipient. But what if there was a magic trick that could not only ease the burden of the caregiver, but also improve the quality of life for the person with dementia? Personalized Music Programming isn't magic. It's science! Extensive neuroscience research has shown our brains are hard-wired to connect music with long-term memory. Candyce Slusher will explain how to use this program, why it works, and discuss various ways using beloved music can enhance your life as a caregiver.</i>

Happy Holidays and a Happy New Year!!!



A program of the WellMed Charitable Foundation

Register online at www.caregiverteleconnection.org or call 866.390.6491 Toll Free

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

FOR OLDER ADULTS AND PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

CREATE A NETWORK OF SUPPORT
TO HELP YOU IN CASE OF AN EMERGENCY.

PREPARE FOR A POWER OUTAGE IF YOU USE ELECTRIC MEDICAL DEVICES.



talk to a health care provider about what to do



identify an alternative power source for devices



inform your emergency contacts of the plan



Plan how you will **communicate** if you have a communication disability.



Plan for your **transportation** if you need help evacuating.



Plan how you will evacuate with any **assistive devices**.

WHAT TO INCLUDE IN AN EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS KIT

- Contact information for important people and care providers
- A list of medicines you need, dosage instructions, and any allergies
- Styles and serial numbers of all medical and assistive devices
- Need-to-know information for first responders and others who might need to help you



Food, water, and essentials for you and pets or service animals



Medicines, medical supplies, batteries, and chargers



Copies of Medicaid, Medicare, and other insurance cards



Learn more: acl.gov/programs/emergency-preparedness

Alzheimer's & Dementia Multigenerational Resources



Book Review

Nice To Meet You . . . Again is a masterfully written, beautifully illustrated and much needed book about the challenging journey traveled by families affected by dementia. The author, Suzanne Bottum-Jones, uses her extensive experience and knowledge, as well as her compassion, to provide readers with the insight and understanding to reestablish ties with loved ones suffering in the fog of cognitive impairment. More importantly, the messages in this book are applicable to persons of diverse ages and cultures and should be required reading for anyone who expects to care for aging parents or patients. Bravo, Suzanne Bottum-Jones!

—Mark A. Sager, MD Emeritus Professor of Medicine Founder of the Wisconsin Alzheimer's Institute University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health

Holidays can be a difficult time for our loved ones with cognitive changes, and creating positive moments together with them can sometimes be one of the biggest challenges for family members. In *Nice to Meet You . . . Again* author Suzanne Bottum-Jones helps young family members understand and connect with loved ones whose memory loss and behavior is sometimes confusing or intimidating. Ms. Bottum-Jones is a nationally-recognized speaker, behavioral consultant, educator, and researcher who tirelessly advocates for treatments and strategies that move beyond prescription medication toward improving quality of life for those experiencing dementia.

FAMILY DYNAMICS IN THE DEMENTIA JOURNEY

Discover ways dementia impacts families and the value of recognizing and accepting each person's strengths and weaknesses as caregivers.

Monday, December 10 | 5:30 - 7:00 p.m.
Hawthorne Public Library
2707 E. Washington Ave., Madison



Caring for the Caregiver Program

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