



# *In Support of Caregivers*

*A Publication of the Caregivers' Resource Center and Alzheimer's Support Unit at the Tompkins County Office for the Aging*

Summer 2013

Vol. 25, Number 2

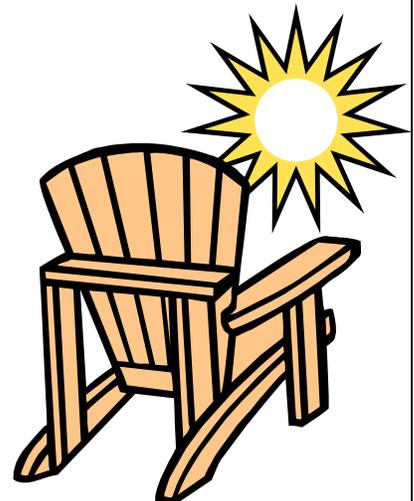
## *In this issue:*

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### *The Caregivers' Resource Center*

*Striving to support those who are caring for family and friends*

- Telephone support available Monday through Friday, 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM
- Referrals to respite services and other community-based services for caregivers and their care-receivers
- Volunteer Support for Caregivers through Project CARE
- \*This quarterly newsletter: *In Support of Caregivers*
- Powerful Tools for Caregivers* classes
- \*Directory: "Resources for Caregivers in Tompkins County"
- Caregiver Support groups
- Periodic workshops for family caregivers
- Alzheimer's education and support
- Lending library of books and videos on caregiving topics
- Speakers available to talk to community and employee groups on caregiving topics



**\*These publications are also available on-line at: [www.tompkins-co.org/COFA](http://www.tompkins-co.org/COFA)**

**(Click on "Local Resources for Older Adults" or "Newsletters")**

# Summer Support Groups

The Caregivers' Resource Center facilitates the following groups. Call 274-5492 for details.



## Bi-weekly Caregiver Support Group Meeting

- Open to those caring for parents, spouses or other elderly relatives or friends.
- (Note: This group will **not** meet during the summer. Next meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> Thursday of September.)
- Meets in the lounge at Lifelong, 119 W. Court St., Ithaca

## Alzheimer's Support Group

- Open to those caring for loved ones with Alzheimer's or other cognitive impairments
- **Meets the 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of each month (June 25, July 23, Aug. 27)**
- 1:00 - 2:30 PM in the Office for the Aging Conference Room (320 N. Tioga St., Ithaca) in the main courthouse.

## Evening Alzheimer's Group

In addition to the daytime group (above), people caring for loved ones with Alzheimer's or related disorders can also attend a group that meets at 6:00 PM on the 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday of each month at Lifelong, 119 W. Court St.. Because of the holiday, the July meeting will be held on Wed., July 10. For information, call the Alzheimer's Association at 785-7852 ext. 119.

# Local Caregiver Services

## Caregivers' Resource Center & Project CARE Services

*Tompkins County Office for the Aging*  
David Stoyell, Katrina Schickel (274-5482)

*The Caregivers' Resource Center & Alzheimer's* **Discover the Resource Center**

*Support Unit* offers family caregivers information and consultation services, support groups, workshops, this newsletter, and a lending library of books and videos on caregiving topics. Stop by or call for an appointment.

Volunteers from *Project CARE* give caregivers a needed break and help out in other ways as needed. We may also be able to arrange for paid home care services or short-term respite for stressed caregivers having difficulty paying for those services. Call Katrina to discuss your needs.

## In-Home Counseling & Respite Service

### *Family and Children's Service*

Robert Levine (273-7494)



A caregiver counselor will meet with family caregivers at their home, his office, or elsewhere and help them work through complex caregiving issues or for emotional support. This program also offers respite aide service (for a fee) to give caregivers a needed break. Reduced rates (sliding scale) available upon request.

## Adult Day Program

### *Longview Adult Day Community*

Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays,  
9 AM- 3 PM

Pamela Nardi (375-6323)



Adult day programs offer older adults companionship along with planned social and recreational activities. It often provides a break from caregiving and time for other matters. Includes lunch and snacks.

# Saying “No” – and Feeling Guilty

**Q** *How do I stop feeling guilty when I have to say no to my parents?*

**A** Learning to say no without feeling guilty is a process most of us go through many times in our lives. Saying no to parents, children, friends, and even co-workers can be difficult. Yet, setting limits about what you are able to do for your parents is important.



The first step in reducing guilt is to identify and understand why this emotion is paired with saying no. Ask yourself—Do I feel guilty when I say no to anything or anybody? How do my parents act when I say no? Are they angry, sad or understanding? Am I somehow turning feelings of disappointment (that I wasn't able to help) into feelings of guilt? Where do my feelings of guilt stem from—my parents or myself?

By first examining your feelings of guilt, you are in a better position to make changes. Talking with other family members, including your parents, about your feelings can help reveal some of the roots of your guilt feelings.

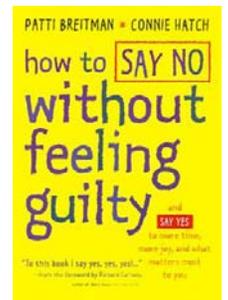
However, understanding why you feel guilty does not stop the feelings. So, resolve to notice the next time you say no whether guilt feelings are cropping up. If they do, try substituting the word “disappointed” for guilty. Notice whether it describes your feelings more accurately. Do I just wish things could be different (rather than thinking I am doing something wrong)?

Remember change is often slow and painful, but also rewarding. Reducing your guilt is a step toward strengthening your relationship with your parents.

Sometimes “no” can be more helpful to your parents than “yes.” Trying to do everything for them can make you feel resentful and diminish the quality of the time you spend with them. In some instances, saying “yes” all the time can make a parent more dependent than you need to be, and less confident in their own abilities. Whether it is just communicating your limits, or perhaps saying no to avoid encouraging unnecessary dependency, speaking truthfully, even when your response is “no” can improve your relationship in the long run.

Sometimes our present guilt feelings are bound up with remembering past mistakes we've made in our relationships. We may even still feel guilty about doing something that we didn't know was wrong at the time.

It's important not to confuse guilt with regret. Guilt results from doing something that we knew was wrong at the time. Regret comes from later learning that we could have done something better. When we understand the difference between guilt and regret, we can move beyond blaming ourselves for what we didn't know or weren't able to do at the time. One specific regret that many caregivers have is that they promised never to place their parent in a residential care facility.



Give some thought to these perspectives the next time you say “no.” You may feel less guilty each time you affirm that you are doing the best you can (or did the best you could in the past). You might then allow yourself to feel sadness, disappointment, or regret without “irrational guilt” short-circuiting your grieving process, guilt that can prevent you from working through your grief to a more serene acceptance of what you cannot change about your loved one's situation.

# Be Good to Yourself

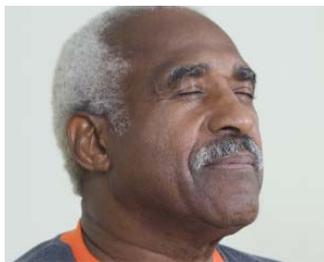
**A**s a caregiver, taking the time to be good to *you* should be a priority. If you care for yourself first, then you can have the energy, strength and determination to take good care of your loved one.

It would be great if all of us could escape to the beaches of a tropical island to reenergize. But the reality for many caregivers is that they do not have the time to take a one- or two-week vacation during the course of the caregiving months or years. What becomes most important, then, is for you do “little things” to take care of yourself every day to prevent the stress and strain of caregiving from creeping into your life and taking control of your mind, body and spirit.

Consider the following ways to get some much-needed “me” time:

## At Home Every Day...

- Find or create a “My Care Space” in your home that you can call “your own” at the beginning and end of your caregiving day. This space can be an entire room or a nook someplace. It should include something that is very special to you, such as a book, a flower, a picture, a pebble, a coin...
- Start and end your day by going to your “My Care Space” for five minutes to do one or more calming activities. These could include meditation, thinking positive thoughts, reading something uplifting like a greeting card or a few sentences from a favorite book, writing your morning/evening thoughts in a journal, or closing your eyes and breathing deeply.



## While You Are Caregiving...

- Develop a daily work schedule that includes a three-minute “mental pause” every hour,

- during which you relax, and mentally—not physically—remove yourself from the current situation as much as possible.
- Consider including your loved one in some of your relaxation activities if he or she is capable of participating and would find the mental pause relaxing. Do something fun: sing a song, or hum; tell a funny story; listen to music; say a gratitude prayer; or breathe deeply five times, using inhale and exhale movements.

## And Routinely,

- Visit your doctor regularly for checkups and more often if you are frequently ill.
- Take an overnight vacation no farther than an hour’s drive away; check into a nice hotel and pamper yourself.
- Connect with agencies in your community that offer respite care so you can take a break from caregiving responsibilities. Use the few hours in sit in the park, see a movie or walk around the mall...
- Stay in touch with friends and family who have an interest in our well-being.
- Practice saying the word “Help!” Let people know when you need help, and ask for it.



*(Written by Geneva Cannon, a former caregiver for her mother and author of “Caring for Your Loved One Who is Ill at Home.” Reprinted with permission from the Spring 2013 issue of **care Advantage**.)*

## **New Family Caregiver Guide and Checklist on Planned Surgery**

Many older adults have planned surgery, such as hip or knee replacements, gall bladder removal, or heart bypass. Surgery can improve function and quality of life, but it also entails risks. Anesthesia risks are well known, but older adults also have longer recovery times and may be vulnerable to adverse drug reactions. [“A Family Caregiver’s Guide to Surgery for Older Adults”](#) suggests what to ask the surgeon about treatment goals, pain, and physical limitations after surgery, as well as costs and post-discharge options. It also includes a checklist, adapted for family caregivers, from the American College of Surgeons and the American Geriatric Society to assess older patients before surgery. This checklist asks questions about the person’s cognitive status, history of falls, nutritional status, and other elements that may affect the surgery and its outcome.

# The Caregivers' Resource Center and Alzheimer's Support Unit

Please call or visit us at the Tompkins County Office for the Aging in the County Courthouse basement, 320 North Tioga St., Ithaca. Open weekdays, 8:30 AM - 4:30 PM.

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## Websites of Interest to Family Caregivers:

**Tompkins County Office for the Aging:** [www.tompkins-co.org/cofa](http://www.tompkins-co.org/cofa)

*\*Click on "Local Resources for Older Adults" to access our Tompkins County resource guides.*

*\*Click on "Newsletters" to view electronic editions of this newsletter for the past year.*

**Family Caregiver Alliance:** [www.caregiver.org](http://www.caregiver.org)

**Next Step in Care:** [www.nextstepincare.org](http://www.nextstepincare.org)

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