

Caregiver Newsletter

In Support of Caregivers

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



TOMPKINS COUNTY
OFFICE FOR THE AGING

Aging Better, Together



WINTER 2022-23: Volume 47

Local Caregiver Support Services

Tompkins County Office for the Aging

Caregiver's Resource Center: Amy Jackson 607-274-5486

Project Care Services: Dawn Sprague 607-274-5499

The Caregiver's Resource Center & Alzheimer's Support Unit offers family caregivers information, consultation services, workshops, this newsletter, packets of information that are helpful to caregivers, and a lending library of books on family caregiving topics. Stop by or call Amy for an appointment.

The Tompkins County Long-Term Care Unit may be able to arrange for paid home care services or short-term respite for stressed caregivers having difficulty paying for those services. Call 607-274-5278 to discuss your needs.

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Visit COFA Website

Caregiver Resources

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Caregiver Counseling

Family and Children's Services - 607-273-7494

A caregiver counselor will meet with family caregivers monthly to help them work through complex caregiving issues or provide emotional support. There is no charge, but donations are accepted. Call to complete an intake.

Individual Counseling and Support

Individual counselors can provide clinical and therapeutic counseling and support for you and/or your loved one.

Ann Dolan, LCSW (counseling for ages 60+ or caregiver for 60+)
(607) 708-0808

Buttermilk Falls Therapy Services (Lisa Luciano, LCSW-R, ACSW)
(607) 591-2763

Adult Day Program

Longview Adult Day Community

Monday through Friday, 9am-3pm; contact Pamela Nardi at 607-375-6323 for more information.

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. Fee: \$75/day includes lunch and snack; minimum 2 days per week, and must be fully Covid vaccinated with booster.



SUPPORT GROUPS

Note: Some Support Groups are still meeting virtually.

Family Caregiver Supportive Group Discussion

Every Other Tuesday at 11 am in-person or online via Zoom, offered by the Tompkins County Office for the Aging. To register or for more information call Amy at 607-274-5486.

Brookdale Caregiver Support Group

This group is currently on hold, and should be re-starting shortly.

Alzheimer's Caregiver Groups

1st Wednesday of the month at 5:30pm in person at Lifelong, 119 W. Court Street, Ithaca. For information, call the Alzheimer's Association at 315-472-4201.

3rd Wednesday of the month at 12:30 pm in person via Zoom through Walden Place, Cortlandville. Call 607-756-8101 for information.

Cancer Caregiver Group

2nd Tuesday of the month, 5:30-7:00pm online via Zoom through the Cancer Resource Center of the Finger Lakes. For family, friends and caregivers of individuals with Cancer. For information call 607-277-0960.

Parkinson's Caregivers Group

For more information, call Carol Grove at 607-279-8257

Funding for Family Caregiver Respite

The Tompkins County Office for the Aging has a limited amount of funding to help family caregivers afford to hire substitute care that enables them to take a break from caregiving, usually a few hours a week. We have some uncommitted funds available if you know a family caregiver who might want to take advantage of this opportunity.

Title III E Respite: This is federal funding that pays for respite service for family caregivers who are caring for an older adult (60 or older) who needs assistance with 2 or more ADL's (dressing, bathing, incontinence, transferring, toileting, eating) **OR** needs substantial supervision due to cognitive impairment (e.g., Alzheimer's or other dementia).

Alzheimer's Respite Scholarships: This is New York State funding granted to Tompkins County through the CNY Alzheimer's Association. This funding pays for respite service (at home or in a licensed care facility) to give a break to family caregivers of persons diagnosed with Alzheimer's or other dementia.

Although neither program is means-tested, we do try to target these funds to those who find it difficult to privately hire enough substitute care.

To Apply or Inquire:

Please encourage family caregivers to contact **Joanne Wilcox** or **Terry McCann** at **Tompkins County Adult and Long Term Care Services (607-274-5278)**. Due to the overall shortage of aides, or if clients prefer it, they may be able to use this funding to privately hire friends or relatives through the Finger Lakes Independence Center (FLIC) Consumer Directed Personal Assistance Program (CDPAP).



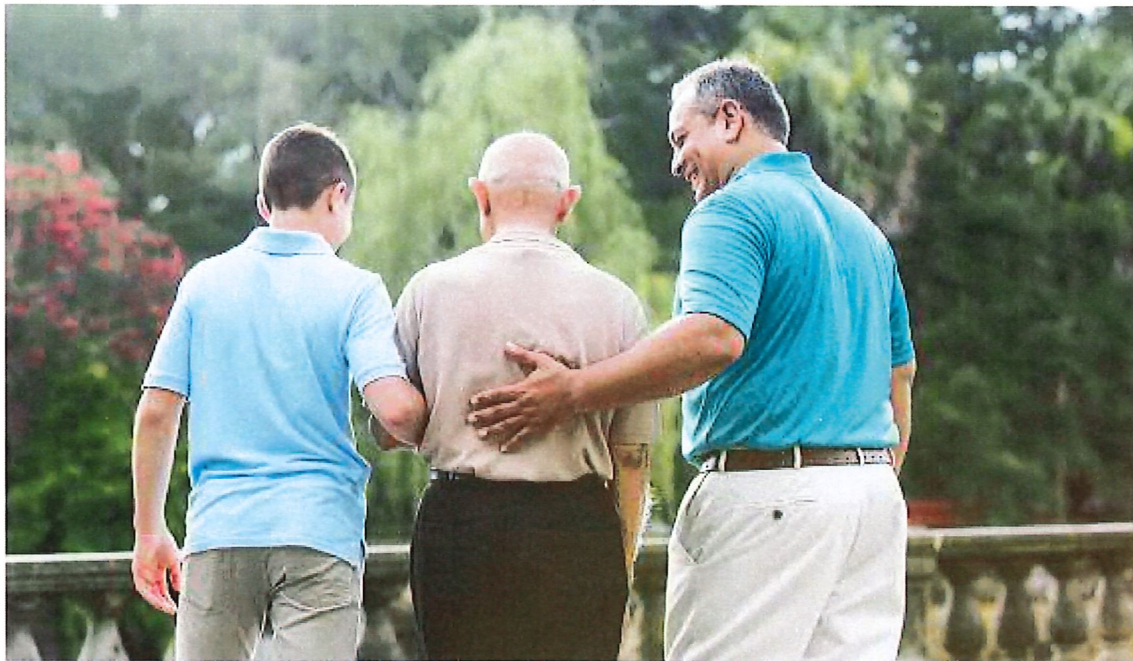
Caregiver Articles

January Topic: Juggling Work & Caregiving

The Nonstop Juggle of Compound Caregiving

Ways to stay afloat when you are providing care for multiple people at the same time

By Amanda Singleton, September 23, 2020. www.aarp.com



Twenty-four hours in a day doesn't feel like enough time. I genuinely believe I could get everything done if the day held about four more awake hours. But it doesn't and so I don't. The house isn't as clean as usual. We eat a lot of pre-prepared meals. Sweatpants are my uniform (although, in the year 2020, aren't most of us dressing more casually?). This article is two days late to my editor. In my current daily juggling act as a compound caregiver, some balls are going to get dropped.

A rise in compound caregiving

Compound caregiving means providing care to two or more people at once. It's not uncommon. A whopping 24 percent of caregivers care for more than one adult person. This number is up significantly from even five years ago.

Multi-person caregiving can occur several times throughout life, at different stages. Sandwich generation caregivers will assist their children and parents for years. Older adults may provide care for a spouse and grandchild together. Rural and multigenerational households frequently find more than one person in a household needing care. For anybody, it is a possibility and it can come sooner than you think — or when you don't expect it.

When I first considered writing this article, I reflected on several personal experiences. I recalled driving from my mother's first chemotherapy appointment straight to a hospital an hour away to attend an aunt's mastectomy. Supporting a relative when she [cared for her adult son](#) with intellectual disabilities and her husband with cancer simultaneously. The time when my husband was physically incapacitated for months when our child was 2 years old. Those experiences — and working professionally with families that have multiple care recipients under one roof — have helped me to understand the complexities presented when two people need your help at the same time. In my mind, I had some decent tips and tools for the compound caregiver.

An unexpected change

And then suddenly ... I became an active caregiver again. My husband [reinjured himself](#) and is unable to stand or walk. Our child is not a toddler anymore, but she is still young and needing lots of love, time and attention. My spouse can give love and attention aplenty, yet can't manage the day-to-day parenting tasks. We are now almost a month in and we are uncertain about how long his recovery will be. This new reality made me realize how important it is to take my own advice about compound caregiving, seek the advice and recommendations of others, and be open to learning more every day (especially about how to adapt to caregiving during a pandemic) to prepare for the months ahead.

More than just double duty

Compound caregivers report physical exhaustion, lack of time to attend to personal needs, less time to work, and increased loneliness or depression. One factor that sets compound caregivers apart from other caregivers is the sheer amount of time spent helping their care recipients. [One study](#) found that compound caregivers reported an average of 52 hours a week on caregiving duties.

For me, it is not just about the time spent on caregiving tasks (fetching ice packs and [coordinating and attending doctors' appointments](#) for my husband and tending to my daughter's needs). In addition, there is a good amount of time spent performing my husband's usual contributions around the home. That means twice the dishes, twice the cleaning, twice the litter box scooping (easily my least favorite, although I love the kitty cat dearly!). Because we work together, I am also managing his in-office tasks while he cannot leave the home. It became clear very early on that I cannot handle it all without assistance. Finding, asking for and [accepting help](#) are key pieces to successful caregiving and the well-being of the compound caregiver.

Considerations for accessing help

Many [caregivers experience isolation](#) in some form. For example, rural caregivers tend to be isolated from communities and services. Compound caregivers experience isolation because they are so entangled in their caregiving lives. And now, [during the time of the pandemic](#), isolation has affected us all in some way.

Visitation may be limited for a facility-bound care partner. You may have difficulty finding friends or relatives who are willing to drop in to see your care partners or assist with your chores at home, maybe because they are immunocompromised or still quarantining. Or perhaps you are isolating so as to not compromise your care partner with a chronic illness. Your regular outlets for caregiver self-care (meeting friends for lunch or attending a religious service) may not be possible right now. It's hard.

Still, don't give up on finding your helping hands. Is it possible to consolidate households with a family member who could help? There are [proven benefits to multigenerational living](#). Maybe it's time to consider adding more people to the household to help you with day-to-day living.

Take a break

[Respite care](#) is an essential caregiver need, and [new programs for respite care](#) are being developed. Your employer may even offer respite care as a benefit. If relatives are able to offer some time with your loved ones, don't be shy in asking (more on that below).

Also consider setting up a "caregivers' pod." Do you know other caregivers who could give you a break? We understand the importance of respite care more than anyone. The first person to help my family was a friend who had just cared for her husband through cancer. She saw I needed a break to attend to my job and took my husband to his therapy. Caregivers just get it.

Outsource jobs when possible

Scheduling daily tasks and organizing are a large part of the compound caregiver's day. Even though it may not feel like it, some of this can be outsourced. Just the simple act of delegating your caregiving calendar to someone else and asking that they handle medical and insurance paperwork can save you hours. In addition, setting up an [online planner](#) or meal sign-up will allow others to help you within their capabilities, without your initiating the request. Family members or friends can manage these calendars, paperwork and online planners from anywhere and on their own schedules.

For those caring for a parent or grandparent, it can be challenging to get siblings and other family members to lend their time and talents to help lighten the load. If you all need help getting on the same page and creating a plan, a mediator could assist in working through your conflicts. A family contract can formalize everyone's roles and responsibilities.

Ask for training

Finally, push for training and do not feel that you have to figure it all out independently. You may be more likely to be providing [complex care](#) than other caregivers. Performing medical or nursing tasks or dispensing multiple medication regimes for multiple people would be a stress on anybody. Ask your loved ones' doctors for training and find out where you can use professionals, if possible. A care manager who handles medication management alone can make sure medications are taken according to directions and on time, which can prevent complications or even hospital readmissions. If you feel that your care partners' medical providers have not adequately prepared you to help a loved one at home, advocate to [get the instruction you need](#).

February Topic: Fighting Loneliness

Fighting Back Against Loneliness and Social Isolation with Aging

Posted: Mar 3, 2022 By: Always Best Care, www.alwaysbestcare.com

Two major challenges that many seniors face are loneliness and social isolation. Older adults often live on their own and may not have close friends or family nearby who can visit regularly. They may struggle with poor vision, hearing, mobility, or health which makes it harder to get out and about by themselves. In turn, this may leave them feeling depressed, frustrated, and disconnected from others.

Taking steps to identify those at risk and helping them to build connections and stay active and engaged is essential. Remember that not everyone who lives alone is lonely or socially isolated. They may live by themselves but still regularly go out and meet up with friends, volunteer in the community, talk with family, and maintain a strong sense of purpose. However, there are plenty of people who don't have this kind of lifestyle.

Talk About It!

Talk to your loved one about their day. Find out what they did and what some things they want to do are. Are they spending much of their time inside and alone? What are some of the challenges to them getting out and interacting with others?

Look for ways you can help, such as:

- Teach them to use technology and connect over Zoom, FaceTime, Google Duo, Skype, or another video conferencing platform.
- Schedule regular times to call or video chat just to check in and catch up. Talking to them for just a few minutes a day can make a difference and give them something to look forward to.
- Getting them assistive devices such as hearing aids, a magnifier, or a walker or cane so they can stay more involved and know what is going on.
- Coordinate visits from friends, family, community groups, or an in-home caregiver. Having someone to talk to, eat a meal with, or socialize with can reduce loneliness and isolation.
- Arrange for transportation to help an aging parent get to the store, appointments, get-togethers with friends, church services, and recreational activities. Having a reliable ride can allow them to do more things independently and participate in things they enjoy.
- Help them adopt a pet if they are willing and able to care for it. Dogs and cats can be wonderful companions and give seniors a greater sense of purpose. They can also be a great conversation starter to meet neighbors when out for walks.
- Partner with an in-home care provider who can visit regularly, provide companionship, assist with activities around the house, escort on errands, and much more.

Loneliness and social isolation can take a toll on seniors' physical, mental, and emotional health. Make a conscious effort to ensure that your aging parents have regular interactions with others, are able to participate in activities they enjoy, are having their daily needs met, and are able to build meaningful connections.



March Topic: Managing Behaviors

Taking Care of YOU: Self-Care for Family Caregivers

By Family Caregiver Alliance, www.caregiver.org

First, Care for Yourself

On an airplane, an oxygen mask descends in front of you. What do you do? As we all know, the first rule is to put on your own oxygen mask before you assist anyone else. Only when we first help ourselves can we effectively help others. Caring for yourself is one of the most important—and one of the most often forgotten—things you can do as a caregiver. When your needs are taken care of, the person you care for will benefit, too.

Effects of Caregiving on Health and Well-Being

We hear this often: "My husband is the person with Alzheimer's, but now I'm the one in the hospital!" Such a situation is all too common. Researchers know a lot about the effects of caregiving on health and well-being. For example, if you are a caregiving spouse between the ages of 66 and 96 and are experiencing mental or emotional strain, you have a risk of dying that is 63 percent higher than that of people your age who are not caregivers.¹ The combination of loss, prolonged stress, the physical demands of caregiving, and the biological vulnerabilities that come with age place you at risk for significant health problems as well as an earlier death.

Older caregivers are not the only ones who put their health and well-being at risk. If you are a baby boomer who has assumed a caregiver role for your parents while simultaneously juggling work and raising adolescent children, you face an increased risk for depression, chronic illness, and a possible decline in quality of life.

But despite these risks, family caregivers of any age are less likely than non-caregivers to practice preventive healthcare and self-care behavior. Regardless of age, sex, and race and ethnicity, caregivers report problems attending to their own health and well-being while managing caregiving responsibilities. They report:

- Sleep deprivation
- Poor eating habits
- Failure to exercise
- Failure to stay in bed when ill
- Postponement of or failure to make medical appointments for themselves

Family caregivers are also at increased risk for depression and excessive use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs. Caregiving can be an emotional roller coaster. On the one hand, caring for your family member demonstrates love and commitment and can be a very rewarding personal experience. On the other hand, exhaustion, worry, inadequate resources, and continuous care demands are enormously stressful. Caregivers are more likely to have a chronic illness than are non-caregivers, namely high cholesterol, high blood pressure, and a tendency to be overweight. Studies show that an estimated 46 percent to 59 percent of caregivers are clinically depressed.

Taking Responsibility for Your Own Care

You cannot stop the impact of a chronic or progressive illness or a debilitating injury on someone for whom you care. But there is a great deal that you can do to take responsibility for your personal well-being and to get your own needs met.

Identifying Personal Barriers

Many times, attitudes and beliefs form personal barriers that stand in the way of caring for yourself. Not taking care of yourself may be a lifelong pattern, with taking care of others an easier option. However, as a family caregiver you must ask yourself: "What good will I be to the person I care for if I become ill? If I die?" Breaking old patterns and overcoming obstacles is not an easy proposition, but it can be done—regardless of your age or situation. The first task in removing personal barriers to self-care is to identify what is in your way. For example:

- Do you think you are being selfish if you put your needs first?
- Is it frightening to think of your own needs? What is the fear about?
- Do you have trouble asking for what you need? Do you feel inadequate if you ask for help?
- Do you feel you have to prove that you are worthy of the care recipient's affection? Do you do too much as a result?

Sometimes caregivers have misconceptions that increase their stress and get in the way of good self-care. Here are some of the most commonly expressed:

Moving Forward

Once you've started to identify any personal barriers to good self-care, you can begin to change your behavior, moving forward one small step at a time. Following are some effective tools for self-care that can start you on your way.

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Tool #1: Reducing Personal Stress

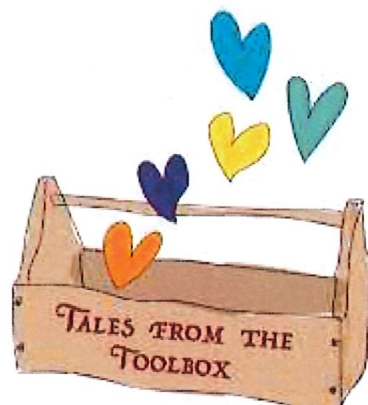
How we perceive and respond to an event is a significant factor in how we adjust and cope with it. The stress you feel is not only the result of your caregiving situation but also the result of your perception of it—whether you see the glass as half-full or half-empty. It is important to remember that you are not alone in your experiences.

Your level of stress is influenced by many factors, including the following:

- Whether your caregiving is voluntary. If you feel you had no choice in taking on the responsibilities, the chances are greater that you will experience strain, distress, and resentment.
- Your relationship with the care recipient. Sometimes people care for another with the hope of healing a relationship. If healing does not occur, you may feel regret and discouragement.
- Your coping abilities. How you coped with stress in the past predicts how you will cope now. Identify your current coping strengths so that you can build on them.
- Your caregiving situation. Some caregiving situations are more stressful than others. For example, caring for a person with dementia is often more stressful than caring for someone with a physical limitation.
- Whether or not support is available.

Steps to Managing Stress

1. Recognize warning signs early. These might include irritability, sleep problems, and forgetfulness. Know your own warning signs, and act to make changes. Don't wait until you are overwhelmed.
2. Identify sources of stress. Ask yourself, "What is causing stress for me?" Sources of stress might be that you have too much to do, family disagreements, feelings of inadequacy, or the inability to say no.



3. Identify what you can and cannot change. Remember, we can only change ourselves; we cannot change another person. When you try to change things over which you have no control, you will only increase your sense of frustration. Ask yourself, "What do I have some control over? What can I change?" Even a small change can make a big difference. The challenge we face as caregivers is well expressed in the following words modified from the original Serenity Prayer (attributed to American theologian Reinhold Niebuhr):
*"God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
Courage to change the things I can,
and (the) wisdom to know the difference."*
4. Take action. Taking some action to reduce stress gives us back a sense of control. Stress reducers can be simple activities like walking and other forms of exercise, gardening, meditation, or having coffee with a friend. Identify some stress reducers that work for you.

Tool #2: Setting Goals

Setting goals or deciding what you would like to accomplish in the next three to six months is an important tool for taking care of yourself. Here are some sample goals you might set:

- Take a break from caregiving.
- Get help with caregiving tasks like bathing and preparing meals.
- Engage in activities that will make you feel more healthy.
- Goals are generally too big to work on all at once. We are more likely to reach a goal if we break it down into smaller action steps. Once you've set a goal, ask yourself, "What steps do I take to reach my goal?" Make an action plan by deciding which step you will take first, and when. Then get started!

Example (Goal and Action Steps):

Goal: Feel more healthy.

Possible action steps:

1. Make an appointment for a physical checkup.
2. Take a half-hour break once during the week.
3. Walk three times a week for 10 minutes.

Tool #3: Seeking Solutions

Seeking solutions to difficult situations is, of course, one of the most important tools in caregiving. Once you've identified a problem, taking action to solve it can change the situation and also change your attitude to a more positive one, giving you more confidence in your abilities.

Steps for Seeking Solutions

1. Identify the problem. Look at the situation with an open mind. The real problem might not be what first comes to mind. For example, you think that the problem is simply that you are tired all the time, when the more basic difficulty is your belief that "no one can care for John like I can." The problem? Thinking that you have to do everything yourself.
2. List possible solutions. One idea is to try a different perspective: "Even though someone else provides help to John in a different way than I do, it can be just as good." Ask a friend to help. Call Family Caregiver Alliance or the Eldercare Locator (see Resources list) and ask about agencies in your area that could help provide care.
3. Select one solution from the list. Then try it!
4. Evaluate the results. Ask yourself how well your choice worked.
5. Try a second solution. If your first idea didn't work, select another. But don't give up on the first; sometimes an idea just needs fine-tuning.
6. Use other resources. Ask friends, family members, and professionals for suggestions.
7. If nothing seems to help, accept that the problem may not be solvable now. You can revisit it at another time.

Note: All too often, we jump from Step 1 to Step 7 and then feel defeated and stuck. Concentrate on keeping an open mind while listing and experimenting with possible solutions.

5 minutes of self care

- do some simple organising ● stretch ●
- complete a short breathing exercise ●
- listen to a song which makes you smile ●
- get some fresh air ● have a glass of water ●
- write 3 nice things about yourself ●
- watch a video which makes you laugh ●



Tool #4: Communicating Constructively

Being able to communicate constructively is one of a caregiver's most important tools. When you communicate in ways that are clear, assertive, and constructive, you will be heard and get the help and support you need. The box below shows basic guidelines for good communication.

Communication Guidelines

- Use "I" messages rather than "you" messages. Saying "I feel angry" rather than "You made me angry" enables you to express your feelings without blaming others or causing them to become defensive.
- Respect the rights and feelings of others. Do not say something that will violate another person's rights or intentionally hurt the person's feelings. Recognize that the other person has the right to express feelings.
- Be clear and specific. Speak directly to the person. Don't hint or hope the person will guess what you need. Other people are not mind readers. When you speak directly about what you need or feel, you are taking the risk that the other person might disagree or say no to your request, but that action also shows respect for the other person's opinion. When both parties speak directly, the chances of reaching understanding are greater.
- Be a good listener. Listening is the most important aspect of communication.

Tool #5: Asking for and Accepting Help

When people have asked if they can be of help to you, how often have you replied, "Thank you, but I'm fine." Many caregivers don't know how to marshal the goodwill of others and are reluctant to ask for help. You may not wish to "burden" others or admit that you can't handle everything yourself.

Be prepared with a mental list of ways that others could help you. For example, someone could take the person you care for on a 15-minute walk a couple of times a week. Your neighbor could pick up a few things for you at the grocery store. A relative could fill out some insurance papers. When you break down the jobs into very simple tasks, it is easier for people to help. And they do want to help. It is up to you to tell them how.

Help can come from community resources, family, friends, and professionals. Ask them. Don't wait until you are overwhelmed and exhausted or your health fails. Reaching out for help when you need it is a sign of personal strength.

Tips on How to Ask

- Consider the person's special abilities and interests. If you know a friend enjoys cooking but dislikes driving, your chances of getting help improve if you ask for help with meal preparation.
- Resist asking the same person repeatedly. Do you keep asking the same person because she has trouble saying no?
- Pick the best time to make a request. Timing is important. A person who is tired and stressed might not be available to help out. Wait for a better time.
- Prepare a list of things that need doing. The list might include errands, yard work, or a visit with your loved one. Let the "helper" choose what she would like to do.
- Be prepared for hesitance or refusal. It can be upsetting for the caregiver when a person is unable or unwilling to help. But in the long run, it would do more harm to the relationship if the person helps only because he doesn't want to upset you. To the person who seems hesitant, simply say, "Why don't you think about it." Try not to take it personally when a request is turned down. The person is turning down the task, not you. Try not to let a refusal prevent you from asking for help again. The person who refused today may be happy to help at another time.
- Avoid weakening your request. "It's only a thought, but would you consider staying with Grandma while I went to church?" This request sounds like it's not very important to you. Use "I" statements to make specific requests: "I would like to go to church on Sunday. Would you stay with Grandma from 9 a.m. until noon?"

Tool #6: Talking to the Physician

In addition to taking on the household chores, shopping, transportation, and personal care, 37 percent of caregivers also administer medications, injections, and medical treatment to the person for whom they care. Some 77 percent of those caregivers report the need to ask for advice about the medications and medical treatments. The person they usually turn to is their physician.

But while caregivers will discuss their loved one's care with the physician, caregivers seldom talk about their own health, which is equally important. Building a partnership with a physician that addresses the health needs of the care recipient and the caregiver is crucial. The responsibility of this partnership ideally is shared between you, the caregiver, the physician, and other healthcare staff. However, it will often fall to you to be assertive, using good communication skills, to ensure that everyone's needs are met—including your own.

Tips on Communicating with Your Physician

- Prepare questions ahead of time. Make a list of your most important concerns and problems. Issues you might want to discuss with the physician are changes in symptoms, medications or general health of the care recipient, your own comfort in your caregiving situation, or specific help you need to provide care. The physician only sees a moment in time with the patient. Make sure you let him/her know what your concerns are in terms of daily care/health.
- Enlist the help of the nurse. Many caregiving questions relate more to nursing than to medicine. In particular, the nurse can answer questions about various tests and examinations, preparing for surgical procedures, providing personal care, and managing medications at home.
- Make sure your appointment meets your needs. For example, the first appointment in the morning or after lunch are the best times to reduce your waiting time or accommodate numerous questions. When you schedule your appointment, be sure you convey clearly the reasons for your visit so that enough time is allowed.
- Call ahead. Before the appointment, check to see if the doctor is on schedule. Remind the receptionist of special needs when you arrive at the office.
- Take someone with you. A companion can ask questions you feel uncomfortable asking and can help you remember what the physician and nurse said.
- Use assertive communication and "I" messages. Enlist the medical care team as partners in care. Present what you need, what your concerns are, and how the doctor and/or nurse can help. Use specific, clear "I" statements like the following: "I need to know more about the diagnosis; I will feel better prepared for the future if I know what's in store for me." Or "I am feeling rundown. I'd like to make an appointment for myself and my husband next week." Or "I need a way for my mother to sleep at night as I am now exhausted being up every two hours at night with her."

Tool #7: Starting to Exercise

You may be reluctant to start exercising, even though you've heard it's one of the healthiest things you can do. Perhaps you think that physical exercise might harm you, or that it is only for people who are young and able to do things like jogging. Fortunately, research suggests that you can maintain or at least partly restore endurance, balance, strength, and flexibility through everyday physical activities like walking and gardening. Even household chores can improve your health. The key is to increase your physical activity by exercising and using your own muscle power.

Exercise promotes better sleep, reduces tension and depression, and increases energy and alertness. If finding time for exercise is a problem, incorporate it into your daily activity. Perhaps the care recipient can walk or do stretching exercise with you. If necessary, do frequent short exercises instead of those that require large blocks of time. Find activities you enjoy.

Walking, one of the best and easiest exercises, is a great way to get started. Besides its physical benefits, walking helps to reduce psychological tension. Walking 20 minutes a day, three times a week, is very beneficial. If you can't get away for that long, try to walk for as long as you can on however many days you can. Work walking into your life. Walk around the mall, to the store, or a nearby park. Walk around the block with a friend.

Tool #8: Learning from Our Emotions

It is a strength to recognize when your emotions are controlling you (instead of you controlling your emotions). Our emotions are messages to which we need to listen. They exist for a reason. However negative or painful, our feelings are useful tools for understanding what is happening to us. Even feelings such as guilt, anger, and resentment contain important messages. Learn from them, then take appropriate action.

For example, when you cannot enjoy activities you previously enjoyed, and your emotional pain overshadows all pleasure, it is time to seek treatment for depression—especially if you are having thoughts of suicide. Speaking with your physician is the first step. (See the FCA fact sheet *Depression and Caregiving*.)

Caregiving often involves a range of emotions. Some feelings are more comfortable than others. When you find that your emotions are intense, they might mean the following:

- That you need to make a change in your caregiving situation.
- That you are grieving a loss.
- That you are experiencing increased stress.
- That you need to be assertive and ask for what you need.



Contributions Are Welcome!

If you can afford a contribution to the Caregivers' Resource Center, it will help support this newsletter, our lending library, and other caregiver services. You can make a contribution in person, or by mail. Please make check payable to the Tompkins County Office for the Aging and if mailing, send to:

Tompkins County Office for the Aging

214 W. Martin Luther King Jr./State St.

Ithaca, NY 14860

Please don't feel pressured to contribute financially if you are not able to do so.

Thank you!

Amy Jackson, Caregiver Resource Coordinator

607-274-5486 or ajackson@tomkins-co.org

Summing Up

Remember, it is not selfish to focus on your own needs and desires when you are a caregiver—it's an important part of the job. You are responsible for your own self-care. Focus on the following self-care practices:

- Learn and use stress-reduction techniques, e.g. meditation, prayer, yoga, Tai Chi.
- Attend to your own healthcare needs.
- Get proper rest and nutrition.
- Exercise regularly, even if only for 10 minutes at a time.
- Take time off without feeling guilty.
- Participate in pleasant, nurturing activities, such as reading a good book, taking a warm bath.
- Seek and accept the support of others.
- Seek supportive counseling when you need it, or talk to a trusted counselor, friend, or pastor.
- Identify and acknowledge your feelings, you have a right to ALL of them.
- Change the negative ways you view situations.
- Set goals.

DONATIONS

WELCOME



Thank You!

Contributions Are Welcome!

If you can afford a contribution to the Caregivers' Resource Center, it will help support this newsletter, our lending library, and other caregiver services. You can make a contribution in person, or by mail. Please make check payable to the Tompkins County Office for the Aging and if mailing, send to:

Tompkins County Office for the Aging

214 W. Martin Luther King Jr./State St.

Ithaca, NY 14850

Please don't feel pressured to contribute financially if you are not able to do so.

Thank you!

Amy Jackson, Caregiver Resource Coordinator

607-274-5486 or ajackson@tom-pkins-co.org

Program Updates

Caregivers:

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- Change the negative ways you view situations.
- Set goals.

Thank you to every caregiver, for all that you do!





Personal Emergency Response Systems

"Help! I've fallen and I can't get up!" is an unfortunate reality for many older Americans. This predicament can cause older adults to feel uneasy about living alone. Thankfully, Tompkins County has several programs and agencies that assist in making the home a safe option for an aging adult!

One such program is the Personal Emergency Response System program (PERS). The Tompkins County Office for the Aging (COFA) partners with Doyle Medical Monitoring to help bring safer options and peace of mind into a client's home. Doyle supplies COFA with units that can connect to a responder within minutes. The PERS unit can connect to either a landline phone or work off cell phone towers. The unit also has a two-way speaker system, allowing you to speak directly with someone from the Doyle call center. The pendant that is wirelessly connected to the unit can be worn around either the neck or on the wrist. Wherever you are in/around your home, this PERS unit will notify a responder with the push of the button on your pendant. We do have GPS units as well!

Here's how it works:

- If you have a fall or a medical emergency, press the button on your pendant.
- An alarm will sound on the unit and Doyle will answer within minutes.
- If you need assistance, Doyle will call a responder to come and assist you.

Standard pricing starts at \$25 a month. Please call our office at 607-274-5482 for more information or to speak with an Outreach Worker who can assist you.



Are you looking for an incredible
volunteer opportunity?

Become a certified Long-Term Care Ombudsman!



Office of the State
Long Term Care
Ombudsman

Do you have:

- excellent communication skills?
- the ability to problem solve?
- a commitment to dignity and respect?
- two hours a week?
- a desire to make a *REAL* difference?

The New York State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program in Chemung, Schuyler and Tompkins Counties is looking for volunteers to serve as **advocates** for residents in long-term care communities.

Volunteers conduct regular facility visits, help identify and resolve concerns and act as an advocate for residents. *Get involved today!*

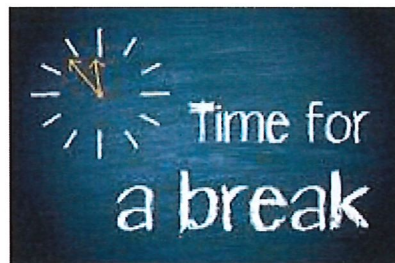
Contact your local

Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program:

P: 607-274-5498

E: pchevallard@tompkins-co.org

Do you live in
**Chemung,
Schuyler
or
Tompkins
County?**



Generations of Care Respite Project

Tompkins County Office for the Aging was awarded a grant to implement a short-term pilot respite project. Generations of Care Respite Project partners with college students, currently enrolled in a health, aging or related program, to provide respite breaks for Tompkins County caregiver's aged 60 or above, who care for a loved one. Students complete certification training in REST (Respite Education and Support Tools) and Tompkins County sexual harassment, values, safety, and confidentiality training.

To learn more information on this project, please contact Dawn Sprague, Project Coordinator, at (607)274-5499 or by emailing dsprague@tompkins-co.org

"I define connection as the energy that exists between two people when they feel seen, heard and valued; when they can give and receive without judgement; and when they derive sustenance and strength from the relationship." Dr. Brene Brown

Project CARE Friendly Visiting Program

Project CARE is a friendly visitor program free to Tompkins County residents age 60 and over, where a volunteer and Senior are matched together and enjoy weekly visits with each other. Volunteers provide companionship, especially to Seniors who are experiencing social isolation or loneliness. Weekly visits are a wonderful opportunity for volunteers and seniors alike to form a caring bond.

What does a friendly weekly visit mean...?

- Comfort to ease the loneliness or social isolation
- Conversation to break the silence
- Laughter to lighten your mood
- Friendship to fill your heart

Please **contact Dawn Sprague, Project CARE Coordinator** at **607-274-5499** or by email at **dsprague@tompkins-co.org**, if you would like to discuss this opportunity further, would like to sign up for a weekly friendly visitor, or if you are interested in becoming a Project CARE volunteer.



The Registry at FLIC

The Registry is a compiled list of private pay aides who have been screened through a face to face interview with the Registry Coordinator at FLIC. References are provided and verified to make sure the aide has the necessary skills and compassion that are important for someone to have when taking care of people in their homes. The Registry also contains a list of skilled nurses varying from pediatrics to palliative care.

For more information **contact Teresa Sivers at 272-2433.**

The Registry program is made possible through funding from the Tompkins County Office for the Aging and the New York State Office for the Aging.



Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP)

This year we have seen prices of nearly everything rise tremendously! The same can be said for heating costs. The Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) is a one-time benefit aimed at supplementing your heating costs during the cold winter months. The 2022-2023 HEAP season opened on 11/1/22 and will close 3/15/23, or when funds are exhausted, whichever happens first. Clients must meet income guidelines and complete a HEAP application that can be picked up at the Office for the Aging at 214 W State St Ithaca NY 14850, or the application can be done online at www.mybenefits.ny.gov. HEAP applications can also be mailed upon request. For more information, or to get a HEAP application, please call the Office for the Aging at 607-274-5482.

The current income eligibility levels for HEAP in 2022-2023 are as follows:

<u>Household Size</u>	<u>Maximum Gross Monthly Income</u>
1	\$2,852
2	\$3,730
3	\$4,608



Are you seeing more hazards in your home? Do you worry about the safety of your living space, or the likelihood of a fall? The Office for the Aging provides Falls Home Safety Assessments at no cost to you. Our Outreach Workers can take a tour of your home, noting potential hazards, and giving recommendations on how to remediate the noted hazards. Our Outreach Workers can also leave you with information on the different agencies that may be able to help with remediating those hazards. For more information, or to set up a Falls Home Safety Assessment, please call the Office for the Aging at 607-274-5482.



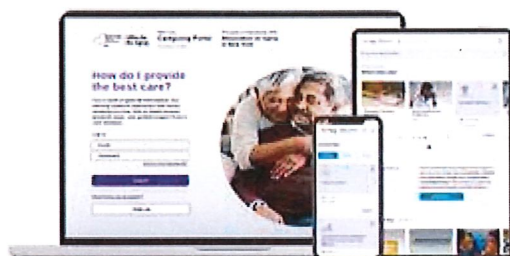
Office for
the Aging

New York
Caregiving Portal
Powered by Truista

Provided in Partnership With:
**Association on Aging
in New York**

Access free training and resources to help you build skills and confidence to provide care at home.

New York's new online Caregiver Portal is designed for families. Articles, videos, tip-sheets, and professional level training offers something for everyone. Our learning portal helps family caregivers reduce stress, find local resources, and provide better care for their loved ones.



"This was wonderful. My husband and I danced and we had a good time singing these oldies but goodies. I will highly recommend these to anyone who's husband or wife has Alzheimer's."

- Pat from "Alzheimer's Music Connect"

Thousands of family caregivers across North America need support. Every caregiver has a custom learning journey, so you can choose the topics that interest you and learn any time of day.



Sign up for FREE today!
NewYork-Caregivers.com

Scan me with
your camera
to visit!





The Caregiver Resource Center at the Office for the Aging

Powerful Tools for Caregivers Classes—stay tuned for upcoming classes in the Spring!

Caregiver Workshops—Monthly workshops on topics of interest to caregivers.

Caregiver Supportive Group Discussion—We currently have a caregiver supportive group discussion every other week on Tuesdays, and welcome any family caregiver to join us. Contact us to discuss!

Caregiver Library - We loan out books on caregiving. We can mail you a book from our library, or you can pick it up! Reach out for the list of available books, or stop in. We also have two kinds of valuable caregiver packets available free in our library: Dementia: When Memory Fades and Caregivers: When Loves Ones Age.

Caregiver Resource Counseling - We are available to help caregivers navigate services available in our community.

For more information about these services please contact the Caregiver Resource Center at the Tompkins County Office for the Aging. We'll be glad to help you!

Phone: 607-274-5486

Email: ajackson@tomkins-co.org

Websites of Interest to Family Caregivers:

Tompkins County Office for the Aging: www.tompkinscountyny.gov/cofa

- Click on "Local Resources for Older Adults" on the left side to access our Tompkins County Resource guides and links to other helpful information.

Family Caregiver Alliance: www.caregiver.org

CaringBridge: www.caringbridge.org

Caregiver Action Network: www.caregiveraction.org

AARP Caregiver Resource Center: www.aarp.org/home-family/caregiving

Next Step in Care: www.nextstepincare.org

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This newsletter is made possible in part by a grant from the NYS Office for the Aging

Contact the Caregiver Resource Center