

Caregiver Connection



Summer 2020 Newsletter

The Caregiver Connection provides information to help support family caregivers who are caring for someone with a disability or chronic health condition. If you have questions about articles or information in the newsletter, or if you would like to remove your name removed from this quarterly newsletter mailing list, please connect with the Caregiver Support Coordinator you have worked with:

Meagan Fandrey
715-261-6062 or toll free: 1-888-486-9545

Caregiver Support Coordinator - VACANT - hiring soon!
Call the ADRC-CW at 1-888-486-9545 with your caregiving questions.

Learning a “New Normal”

We successfully “flattened the curve” in terms of the impact COVID-19 had within our local communities, which is wonderful news amidst a pandemic. But with stores, businesses and other providers resuming services with new safety measures in place, you may feel uncertain or confused about what is safe and what is not. The bottom line is that the virus is still spreading in our communities so resuming normal activities does carry some risk. It will be important to think about what you’re comfortable with and adjust your activities accordingly. It’s okay if you prefer to remain cautious and limit time in stores or places with large groups while your friends and family members may be doing something different.



Whether you plan to be more cautious moving forward, or if you’re throwing caution to the wind and falling back into your pre-pandemic routine, the basic safety measures we’ve grown accustomed to over the past four months can help prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus. These include:

- When outside of your home, maintain a distance of six feet from other people.
- Wear a cloth face covering while out at the store, clinic, or running errands.
- Avoid touching your face.
- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes (even if they’re allergy-related).
- Stay home if you feel sick.

If you would like to resume some of the activities you enjoyed before the pandemic, here are some tips to help you approach these outings with safety in mind:

Shopping - Although many public health officials still encourage limiting non-essential trips to the store, following the social distancing guidelines put in place by the store, especially in areas where there may be many people, like the check-out or fitting rooms, may help you stay safe. Online ordering and curbside pick-up may also still be an option. If you’re unsure, phone first so you can determine what you’re comfortable with.

Eating Out - The biggest concern when it comes to dining in a restaurant is being in close proximity to other people. Many adjustments have been made to maintain social distancing in dining areas, and some “high

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Learning a “New Normal” (continued from page 1)

touch items”, like plastic menus, have been replaced with disposable paper menus. Many restaurants are still offering carryout or curbside pick-up options if you prefer.

Visit the Salon or Barber Shop - Unfortunately, when cutting someone’s hair, it’s impossible to maintain the six foot social distancing guideline with your stylist. Other safety measures have been put into place at hair salons and barber shops, including limiting the number of people inside at one time. In addition, the client and stylist are both required to wear a face mask, and equipment is sanitized between uses. If you’re concerned about safety, call first and talk with your stylist about their safety measures. If you’re concerned, ask if they can make a housecall to cut your hair at home.

Outdoor Exercise - Experts agree that spending time outdoors is a safe activity if you’re able to maintain social distancing while you’re out. Going for a walk or bike ride, playing a round of golf, or spending time at the park are all excellent ways to enjoy the summer weather. Just be cautious to maintain 6 feet of distance from others who may be near.

Ultimately it’s up to you to decide what level of activity you’re comfortable with, and what is safest for you and the person you’re caring for. Staying informed of local updates regarding virus numbers and potential community spread of the virus can also help. To connect with this information, review your local health department’s website or Facebook page, or give them a call.

Source: Petersen, Andrea. (May 12, 2020). Safety Advice for Re-opening: How to Reduce Your Risk as Coronavirus Restrictions Ease. Wall Street Journal. Retrieved from: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/safety-advice-for-reopening-how-to-reduce-your-risks-as-coronavirus-lockdowns-ease-11588510800>

Recognizing Caregiver Burnout

According to AARP, caring for another person with a chronic health condition or a disability takes time, effort and can be emotionally challenging. Over time, caregiving responsibilities can take a toll on your body and mind. Over time, that physical, mental and emotional wear and tear can lead to caregiver burnout. As a caregiver, it’s important to watch for signs of caregiver burnout and adjust your routine accordingly. If you’re worried that you’re overly stressed by your caregiving situation, or if you may be to a point of feeling burnt out, it’s important to start reducing your level of caregiving-related stress. You can do this by taking a break from your caregiving responsibilities, participating in activities you enjoy, joining a support group, nurturing positive relationships with your closest friends, and taking care of your own health by eating healthy meals, getting enough sleep, and exercising when possible. If you’re feeling overwhelmed by your caregiving situation and need ideas to help you carve out some time for yourself, the ADRC-CW can help! Call 1-888-486-9545 to connect with a staff member who can discuss options with you.

Source: AARP, “How to Avoid Caregiver Burnout”. Retrieved from: <https://www.aarp.org/caregiving/life-balance/info-2019/caregiver-stress-burnout.html>

Signs of Caregiver Burnout:

Feelings of anxiety, stress or depression

Feeling tired and run down

Difficulty sleeping

Overreacting to minor happenings

New or worsening health problems

A Different Reality...Stepping into the Reality of Someone with Dementia

By Meagan Fandrey, Caregiver Support Coordinator

Every day, caregivers come face to face with a different reality - the reality of someone with dementia. It is the reality driven by a brain that is no longer functioning as it did before. This brain cannot make sense of the world, so the person you care for may ask where her deceased husband or young, yet now grown, children are, several times per day. The person you once knew better than anyone may seem unrecognizable, saying things that are completely out of character and simply untrue. The person you love may no longer recognize you as someone who has shared a lifetime of making memories.



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Many caregivers find themselves wondering how to respond. You might feel inclined to correct, encourage the “true” version of what happened, or try or try desperately to get your loved one to remember, as you do. While all of these responses may be done out of love, what you might find is it results in increased agitation, anxiety, grief and fear in your loved one followed by behaviors that reflect such feelings.

What can you do or say instead? How can you provide calm and helpful responses to your loved one?

- Keep it simple. Try a brief response, knowing that it may need to be said more than once. Your loved one’s short term memory has been affected and what you say one moment may not be retained just a few minutes later.
- Think about a response that makes the most sense based on the question being asked and the time period that is your loved one’s current reality. Consider that your loved one’s current reality may include a person who is no longer living. Correcting your loved one by stating that the person has passed away multiple times may result in re-living that grief again and again. Take some time to think about your comfort level with talking to your loved one as if that person is still living, if it brings him or her feelings of safety and security or leads into a positive interaction. If uncomfortable with that, you may try changing the subject or using distraction if your loved one talks about someone who is no longer living. This could involve talking about a favorite topic such as sports, weather, birds, or engaging the loved one in an activity like going for a walk or playing a game. Other caregivers bring loved ones back into current time because he or she will specifically ask what year it is, if a family member is living or deceased, who someone is, etc. The caregiver will answer simply and honestly and choose where to lead the conversation based on how their loved one responds.
- Stay calm and reassuring, aware of your own body language and tone of voice. Body language and tone of voice may be understood better than the spoken word. Eye contact, a smile, and open posture can be meaningful.
- Reminisce with patience. Your loved one may recall memories of long ago and be comforted by being given time to talk about such recollections. He or she may take the lead, or you can encourage this by looking at old family photos, listening to favorite music or talking about an old holiday tradition. Watch your loved one’s reaction and see where it may go.

Even with such tips in mind, there will be days when you lose your patience, you find yourself correcting or maybe compelling your loved one to “remember”. Forgive yourself on these days, knowing you can try again after a moment to yourself, a walk, or another activity that brings you some comfort and relaxation. Caregiving is a journey that can be filled with love and frustration, patience and impatience, confidence and insecurities. For more caregiver support and resources that may assist you in your caregiving journey, contact the ADRC-CW at 1-888-486-9545.

Dementia Care Specialist Joins ADRC-CW Staff

The ADRC-CW was awarded a grant from the State of Wisconsin to hire a Dementia Care Specialist. This role is designed to improve awareness of Alzheimer's disease and dementia in our local communities through community education, outreach, and partnerships. Scott Seeger has joined the ADRC-CW in this exciting new role. Previously, Scott served as a medical social worker with a local health system for 15 years. Before that, he worked as a social worker in a long-term care facility. During these opportunities, Scott was able to partner with individuals, their caregivers, medical providers, and community resources to support the individuals as they dealt with issues related to cognitive changes.



Scott is excited to join the ADRC team and offer opportunities for individuals and businesses to learn more about dementia through personal and community education sessions. Scott looks forward to increasing awareness about dementia, supporting and encouraging early detection and early intervention, decreasing the negative stigma that people face when they live with dementia, and fostering positive relationships by showing that we don't have to fear dementia.

Scott shares: "dementia is something that will impact all of our lives. It may be a personal matter, or something that affects a loved one, a neighbor, a friend, or an acquaintance, but it will affect all of us in some way. Dementia brings much uncertainty, but with education and awareness, we can embrace this uncertainty and be better prepared to address issues, find support, or offer support. The ADRC is here to help and I look forward to getting a chance to partner and collaborate with you. You are not alone, we are in this together."

New Caregiver Resource in Wisconsin - Trualta

By: Jane Mahoney, Older Americans Act Consultant – Greater Wisconsin Agency on Aging Resources

With social distancing guidelines preventing the usual support groups, caregiving classes, and conferences from proceeding as usual, a new educational tool is now available in Wisconsin. **Trualta** is an online portal that helps caregivers develop skills and find local resources, all from the comfort and safety of home.

Trualta gives you unlimited access to articles, videos, audio lessons, and printable tip sheets to improve your caregiving journey. You can develop skills and feel more confident in your ability to handle challenging care situations including those related to personal care, safety, brain health, and even your own wellness. You will have access to trainings from Teepa Snow who teaches skills and techniques to improve your ability to care for someone with dementia. Alzheimer's Music Connect can also be accessed through the portal, which can improve the mood and behavior of someone with dementia. You can learn about strokes and how they affect a person's thinking, movement and communication. Providing hands-on care like shaving, showering and oral care are also covered. Topics such as Keep Your Cool, Caregiver Guilt and Balancing Work and Caregiving provide helpful tips for keeping yourself mentally and emotionally healthy as well as other topics related to caregiving; and new content is being added regularly.



With an on-demand learning library this big, you get to choose what you learn, how you learn, and when you learn. The lessons vary from 5 minutes to 2 hours, so you can pick what you want based on the time you have. With Trualta, you have access to materials any time of the day and anywhere you are, so you don't have to worry about fitting Trualta into your busy schedule. Once you create your Trualta account, you will continue to have access to the materials for the entire year.

Trualta is easy to use on a computer, laptop or tablet and is available at no cost to Wisconsin caregivers thanks to the National Family Caregiver Support Program. If you are interested in learning more about Trualta, contact the Caregiver Support Coordinator you have worked with.