

# Caring For Caregivers



January, 2020



## Happy New Year

N- Notice the good

E- Engage with others

W- Worry is wasted time

Y- You can do it!

E- Easy does it

A- Act on your decisions

R- Resilience and renewal

### Elderhaus Caregiver Groups

#### Life Transitions Group

Every Monday 1-3 p.m.  
or every Wednesday 9-11 a.m.  
At Elderhaus

#### FTD Caregivers Group

3rd Tuesday Monthly 2:30-4 p.m.  
Daz Bog @ Cherry and Mason



I'm so old they cancelled my  
blood type. Bob Hope

When I was a boy the Dead Sea  
were only sick. George Burns

## New Year Renewal and Resilience

There is always a sense of new possibilities as the new year rolls in. Maybe this is the year you will \_\_\_\_\_ (fill in the blank). If we as caregivers take time to reflect we may see that we always have the ability to make new choices even in the midst of caregiving. Resilience is the ability to bounce back, to recover and grow when faced with adversity. Renewal is the ability to grow strong again. Resolutions are often broken, but resilience and renewal are the bedrock of self-care and rewarding caregiving.

On [homecareassistance.com](http://homecareassistance.com) 10 suggestions are offered to strengthen resilience: 1. **Make connections;** 2. **Take care of yourself;** 3. **Keep things in perspective and don't view crises as insurmountable problems;** 4. **Have confidence in your decision-making abilities;** 5. **Develop a sense of optimism and humor;** 6. **Engage in meaningful activities;** 7. **Practice compassion;** 8. **React less to change;** 9. **Give yourself positive messages;** and 10. **Remember that this time is a gift.**

## What's in a Name?

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Dementia, Alzheimer's, senility, neurodegenerative disease... Sometimes terms are used interchangeably when their meanings are not the same. Many people believe dementia and Alzheimer's mean the same thing; they do not. Dementia means a loss of brain function that occurs with certain diseases and affects memory, thinking, language, judgment and behavior. Those who have Alzheimer's, Lewy Body, and FTD all have symptoms of dementia, but other diseases such as Huntington's Disease, MS and Parkinson's Disease also show dementia. Dementia can be caused by non-reversible, neurodegenerative changes, but some causes of dementia can be reversed, e.g., brain infections, brain injury and metabolic changes

Caregivers can wait a long time for a diagnosis, but naming a disease can empower caregivers to educate themselves. Knowledge and understanding of our loved ones' disease can allow caregivers to separate the person from the disease, for example, my husband is upset because he has Alzheimer's, not because he no longer cares for me.

Family and friends need to be educated about what to expect as neurodegenerative damage progresses. We may be powerless over the course of the disease, but knowledge is power.

## The Costs of Caregiving

In her article, *The Hidden Costs of Caregiving* (AARP Bulletin 11/19), Laura Petrecca notes that caregiving generates significant out-of-pocket expenses and indirect costs for 78% of caregivers. Caregivers may take on more debt and save less for retirement. Skimping on their own needs, 30% of caregivers may be forced to cut back on household maintenance, clothes and groceries. Caregivers spend a startling 80 minutes less per day on paid work. They may be passed up for promotions or have their retirement benefits reduced. 32% of caregivers have left a job because of the overwhelming demands of caregiving. Neglecting their own health, caregivers may skimp on dental care, routine or preventive care, or even going to the doctor when sick or injured. Statistics vary, but somewhere between 30% and 60% of caregivers die before the person they are caring for.

The financial, social and physical costs of caregiving are staggering and we will all need care or provide care in our lifetimes. What can be done to lower individual and societal costs of caregiving? Caregivers must be heard; we need to be vocal about the stresses of caregiving. We can be proactive in seeking support for ourselves and our families. The answer is not to become more determined to go it alone, but to form communities of caregivers. Employers need to be educated about the needs of their employee caregivers. Family leave, and flextime could help support caregivers on the job. State/federal legislation can support caregivers from the top down.

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