



## Caring for Caregivers

August, 2020

### Caregiving and Covid 19

Caregivers face many mental and physical stressors. Perhaps most concerning is the social isolation that can occur as their world narrows due to the demands of caregiving. Self-care and respite care are the pillars of caregiver support. Many of the lifelines for caregivers are not readily available due to Covid 19. Seeing friends in the community is curtailed due to social distancing and fears of infection. Day programs and home care services may not be available.

FEMA has awarded a grant to SummitStone Health Services to enhance counseling services to those impacted by Covid 19. Becky Folks is the Senior Care Specialist for Colorado Spirit which is funded by the grant. She can be reached at 970-413-0646. Becky works closely with community organizations to connect people with available resources. Give her a call to help yourself and your loved one through this horrible pandemic.

### Is it okay to leave my loved one alone?

This is a difficult decision, and both physical care needs and cognitive abilities need to be considered. Does your loved one have serious health problems like epilepsy or shortness of breath? If so constant supervision may be required regardless of cognitive ability.

What questions can help to determine cognitive abilities and how safe your loved one is if left alone? Consider these:

- Do they wander?
- Do they know what to do in an emergency?
- Can they use the bathroom without help?
- Do they get distressed if they can't find you?
- Can they be destructive in times of stress?
- Will they hurt themselves?
- Are they a big fall risk?

You can take steps to make your home safer, especially if you plan to leave your loved one alone for brief times. Lower the temp of the hot water heater. Remove or lockup cleaning and poisonous products. Remove knobs on the stove when not in use. Lock up sharp objects and medications. Keep the car keys locked up or on your person. Keep doors and windows locked with alarms on them. Get rid of clutter and rugs. Let your neighbors know to keep an eye on your loved one and how to direct him/her home if they leave the house.

### Disabled Resource Services

People of any age and disability, physical and cognitive, can get services like information and referral, access to community resources, advocacy, benefits counseling and medical equipment rentals. Call them at 970-482-2700. Northern Colorado has many wonderful services for seniors. Support is available!

---

## Write it Down

---

Put pen to paper and write those lists, but don't be a slave to checking everything off everyday. We don't need another reason to feel bad about ourselves. Caregivers have so much to remember that any tool to help organize your life is helpful. How many times have you walked out of a doctors appointment with questions you forgot to ask?

---

We all get home from the grocery store without the item we went to the store for! Writing down instructions and timing for medications can mean life or death. A small whiteboard with the medication schedule can also help other caregivers step in for you. Write down a list of tasks you can assign to those who ask "What can I do to help?" Write down those quotes that give you comfort. Write down your thoughts and you might discover you are putting yourself down. So write down some positive messages for yourself.

## Zoom Support Groups.

Elderhaus offers two virtual caregiver support groups weekly. All community members are welcome.  
Every Monday 1-3 p.m.  
Every Wednesday 9-11 a.m.

Please send your email address to: [caregivers@elderhaus.org](mailto:caregivers@elderhaus.org) and you will be sent an invitation with a link to join the meeting. Even though we can't meet in person we can still offer support, encouragement and friendship to each other. Don't isolate. Zoom!

## Encouraging Conversation With Dementia

How do you encourage someone with dementia to talk? Some simple ideas : 1. Make eye contact but don't crowd them. Avoid talking from behind them or from another room; 2. Resist interrupting or finishing their sentences for them . Be patient and give them time to answer; 3. Use memory triggers like photo albums, or music they love, to help them connect to happy times; 4. Keep it simple and stick to one topic. Use "yes" or "no" questions and simple choices; 5. Encourage them to join in conversations with other people. Find social activities for those with dementia, like day programs and memory cafes; 6. Speak slowly and clearly. Use short sentences and don't mumble or ramble; 7. Be respectful and don't patronize them. Don't talk as if they are not there or they are a child; 8. Tune out background noise. Turn off the radio and T.V. and talk in a quiet place; 9. Use their name, and use it often; 10. Silence is golden. Don't panic if there are silences. Try again to engage.

**Elderhaus Cares for Caregivers**  
Our daytime programs are currently closed due to Covid 19. Support services for caregivers are available virtually. Contacts: Tim or Danita @970 221-0406  
[caregivers@elderhaus.org](mailto:caregivers@elderhaus.org)