



**May  
2021**



## **Caring for Caregivers**

### **Go Play Outside**

Lather on your sunscreen, grab your water and get outside! The Vitamin D that the sun provides is good for you and your loved one with dementia. Research has shown that people with dementia who spent as little as 10 to 15 minutes a day outside benefited. Take a walk, dig in the dirt or find a petting farm. Do a craft outside at a picnic table and then have a picnic! You'll feel better and so will your loved one.

### **Ageism in Clinical Trials**

Older persons participate minimally in clinical drug trials. For example, even when the drugs being studied are for stroke, participants in the clinical trials were sometimes as much as ten years younger than the average age of stroke patients. A 2015 Pub Med article reported that typically clinical trials in the adult population include patients aged between 16 to 64. It is likely the non-participation of older adults in clinical trials has a profound impact on health care for older adults.



Aging is not for wimps! Many caregivers portray the resilience and strengths of older Americans. Elderhaus employees and Board of Directors are diverse in age from younger to older and are a good example of people respecting and actively living healthy, positive aging every day. Join us in celebrating Older Americans month.

### **Anger: Caregivers Feel It And Deal With It**

"Resentment is the caregiver's dirty little secret," says Lisa Hutchinson in "Today's Caregiver". Caregivers who let hurt and anger build up without an outlet build resentment. Avoiding the guilt-anger-resentment cycle is important for the safety of those needing care, but it is also critical for the mental and physical health of caregivers and their immediate families. Caregivers are not automatons and it is normal and understandable to feel anger when we are verbally or physically abused.

What are we angry about? The relationship between caregiver and care recipient is built on shifting sand, constantly changing as the disease progresses and life circumstances change. Caregivers can be angry about the "unfairness" of being thrust into the caregiving role and their changing relationship with the care recipient. We may put our life plans and dreams on hold while we caregive. This is not what we planned for! On one level we know that it is not the person, but the disease or disability we are angry at, but anger can spill over and be misdirected at others. Remember that anger hurled at you has more to do with your loved one's losses and less to do with anything you did wrong. This can defuse anger when you experience an unprovoked attack from your care recipient. When the person you are caring for is demanding and ungrateful, caregivers can question why they are making the sacrifice to caregive at all. No single caregiver can meet all of the needs of their loved ones. More than love and compassion are necessary for quality caregiving.

Anger gives us important information about injustices or mistreatment, but sometimes anger is a cover for sadness, and allowing ourselves to grieve will soften the anger. Allow yourself moments of imperfection and don't berate yourself. Pause before speaking or acting out in anger. Go to another room, scream in your car or take a brisk walk. Put your feelings in a letter and tear it up. Find a support group so you can safely share your angry feelings. Find an adult day program for your loved one so you can have respite from caregiving. Have you been "volunteered" to be the primary caregiver by family members? If you are not the right person to provide the majority of care, get more help or make other arrangements.

## Zoom Support Groups

**Elderhaus offers two virtual caregiver support groups weekly.**

**All community members are welcome.**

**Every Monday 1-3 p.m. or 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 meetings. Even though we can't meet in person we can still offer support to each other.**

## The Abused Caregiver

Some spouses and parents who are being cared for abuse their caregivers. "Agingcare" reports this abuse, although not rare, is largely unaddressed and underreported. Resentful care recipients who don't want to rely on their caregivers can become angry and aggressive. If a care receiver was abusive as a parent or spouse prior to dementia, it is likely to continue as the illness progresses. The abused caregiver is shockingly common with dementia and it is very difficult to address in personal care situations. Sole caregivers who are isolated may fall victim to abuse and keep silent about it for too long.

There are many variables for a caregiver to consider in making the decision to care, limit care, or not provide care for an abusive parent or spouse. Delusional, paranoid beliefs held by the care receiver, such as an unfaithful spouse or someone is stealing from them, can lead to intense anger and higher risk of abusive behaviors by the care receiver. In some situations, anti-psychotic medications may be necessary. Hiring a professional caregiver can create distance between the family member and the abusive care receiver, but sometimes the abuse transfers to the paid caregiver. Consulting medical professionals could also help uncover pain issues, which could lead to lashing out. No one should remain in an abusive environment, even if the abuser is "sick". Caregivers need to know it is appropriate to step back from an abusive situation and seek other arrangements for care, which may include placement in a care facility. Adult Protective Services is not focused on the issue of caregivers who are abused by the people they are caring for. Much more needs to be done. This is an issue which needs more attention and study.

## The Care in Caregiver

What does it mean to be a *caregiver*, to *care* for someone? The dictionary has several definitions: things that are done to keep someone healthy and safe, to feel concern and interest, watchful attention, to feel regard and to want to do something or be something. Sounds a lot like compassion, doesn't it? In Europe the word carer is usually used instead of caregiver. Carer has a nice feel to it, and the root of both terms is care. Many older Americans are caregivers and we in turn need to support and care for them.

Nothing messes up your Friday like realizing it's only Tuesday. Ha!

Your secret is safe with me. I wasn't even listening. Ha!

A computer once beat me at chess, but it was no match for me at kick-boxing. Ha!

**Elderhaus is open on a limited basis with Mindset and Elderhaus groups. Details are posted on our website [elderhaus.org](http://elderhaus.org) and Facebook page. Support services for caregivers are available virtually. Contacts: Tim or Danita @970-221-0406 or [caregivers@elderhaus](mailto:caregivers@elderhaus)**