



Senior Care News

Welcome to 2012! As you enter the new year, we encourage you to take a few moments to be thankful for your loved one. Being a caregiver can be so stressful and nonstop that caregivers often don't step back and appreciate the relationship between caregiver and loved one. This stress and pace can also mask the warning signs of a caregiver's own failing health, including emotional health.

Because we recognize that caregiving can be stressful and solitary, we invite you to make an appointment to see our Caregiver Counselor. This counseling service, which is free to caregivers, can help give you new perspectives on your role as a caregiver. Articles on pages 2 and 3 of this newsletter offer insights into how valuable and affirming counseling can be.

Please contact the Caregiver Resource Center at 463-6177 or 1(877)746-6177 to find out more about the Family Caregiver Counseling program and our other services. As always, we love to hear suggestions about how we can best support you.

Thank you for all you do, and Happy New Year to you!

Jetta Whittaker

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Top Ten Things For Caregivers(And Everyone) To Do To Avoid Chaos Later On

adapted from caregiver.com

1. Keep records of all medications and reactions: make notes about what works, what doesn't, and when you informed the physician of any problems.
2. Keep records of all doctor appointments: the reason for the visit, the doctor's responses to your concerns, any procedures performed, etc.
3. Start or continue to maintain copies of medical records for your loved one, and for yourself, as well. These will be beneficial should a grievance arise or if there are questions about medical histories.
4. Plan for the unexpected: discuss plans and wishes of everyone involved in the caregiving family. Talk about final resting places and what arrangements your family will want.
5. Have an Advance Directive filled out and given to the primary physician and all relatives who may need the form.
6. Have a Last Will and Testament completed or updated: without a signed Will, the courts will decide how to distribute the possessions of your loved ones.
7. Keep a record of where all-important documents are kept. When an emergency or tragedy occurs, locating information should not be where we spend our thoughts and energies.
8. Record all monetary involvements: investments, resources creditors, debtors, business transactions, etc.
9. Have an insurance analysis done: is your home, life and health insurance still appropriate for your family's needs? What about the insurance policies for your loved ones? Do you all have enough coverage to take care of any eventuality? Do you have provisions for Long Term Care? For respite care? Is your house adequately covered given the state of the weather patterns?
10. Clean out the medicine chest. Look for expiration dates on all medicine, and check with your doctor about previous medications which will either be harmful with current prescriptions or which are no longer effective for your or your loved one. Not only will you save space, you might also save a life.

A local caregiver whose family faced the difficult decision of a Pioneer Home placement for one member of a couple and continued home care for the other recently praised the services of our Family Caregiver Counseling program. This caregiver wanted to share with other caregivers the many benefits she and her family experienced from their counseling sessions.

What can you get out of caregiver counseling? Here's what my siblings and I found.

1. **Relief.** Finally, somebody heard us – actually listened to our whole, long, complicated story – and without judgment. Truth? I suspect that everybody's story is long and complicated. I think it's one reason caregivers can feel so isolated – we're afraid if we start talking to someone, we won't be able to stop. Our caregiver counselor let us keep going until we'd really SAID it all to somebody – somebody who listened compassionately and said, "Wow. You've really been doing a lot." Amazing, how healing just being listened to is.

2. **Safety.** Having been listened to in a deep, compassionate, and above all in a nonjudgmental way, it becomes more possible to explore alternatives, consider new approaches, think outside of the box. Which brings me to:

3. **Problem Solving Assistance.** Buoyed by a sense of being heard, respected, appreciated, and safe, problem solving becomes possible. Mired in caregiving tasks, dealing with difficult situations and, sometimes, difficult people, it's easy to forget that solutions are even possible. Unexpressed emotions (sometimes we don't even know they're there!) can easily block our ability to identify specific difficulties, much less figure out what to do about them. Someone a step removed can say, "What about this? What about that?" Just entertaining the possibility that something is possible helps clear some mental space to think creatively. We adopted a mantra – which we continue to remind ourselves of: "It's just possible that everything will be okay."

4. **Permission.** Permission to feel all the ways we feel – angry, sad, exhausted, confused, and not to have to pretend everything is going great is a huge relief. Even among ourselves, there are things it can feel outrageous to say or to suggest. Daring to press that "not-nice" edge, is a relief, too. An even more important element of "permission," though, is the permission to STOP, to take time do things for ourselves – taking breaks, having a massage, nurturing our own souls in whatever ways work for us. Exploring those ways is another gift of the counseling.

5. **Rehearsal.** In sharing caregiving with others, the presence of a counselor facilitates careful listening to each other. Interruptions that are common in family settings (let's face it) are different in the presence of a compassionate listener. We're a little more respectful, a little more open to ideas, a little more tender with each other, when our interactions are observed – even by someone who's non-judgmental. And that pattern of care in listening to each other in the sessions with the counselor becomes a kind of rehearsal for all the conversations we share outside of the sessions and makes us better caregivers for each other as well as for those identified as being in our care.

When caregivers burn out, everybody loses. Getting help to be better caregivers for our loved ones is important; getting help to be better caregivers to ourselves and each other as we go through this process is lifesaving.

CAREGIVERS NEED CARE TOO

By Jean Jasmine, Caregiver Counselor

The decision to care for an ailing loved one at home often seems like a simple and logical one, done out of love and often financial necessity. But when family members or friends become primary caregivers, their lives become impacted in more ways than they could have possibly predicted. Constant needs, medical concerns, emotional outbursts, irregular sleep patterns, depression, fear about declining health, and often an accompanying dementia can drain the caregiver's physical and emotional reserves beyond expectations. When personal and family life is interrupted by the demands of caregiving, there is little opportunity for the caregiver's reserves to be replenished through their normal sources of support. Work, social, recreational and creative activities are often abandoned out of necessity as the caregiver's life becomes narrowed in fulfilling the original goals. The constant stress, concern about the loved one, and legitimate frustration that their own needs are being neglected can create health concerns – also neglected -- for the caregiver as well.

Distance-caregiving can also present unique difficulties. When one's parent is ill and not living in the same home, the caregiver has the constant concerns about how to best arrange for and evaluate care, how to coordinate with siblings, and how to maintain a meaningful relationship with the parent. As with in-home care, the caregiver is also confronting role reversal where the parent is more the child and the child becomes the "parent."

The caregiver is often the last one to ask for help, since the needs of the ailing loved one always seem paramount. But if the caregiver is not supported, how can they be there for their loved one? **Caregiver Counseling might be the answer.**

A counselor who comes to the home can provide a "safe space" for the caregiver to ask questions, to vent, and to consider new ways they can support their loved one, and themselves. By listening without judgment, a counselor can truly BE THERE for the caregiver, respectfully acknowledging the sacrifices, validating the wide range of emotions, and giving deserved credit for the good job the caregiver is doing. Seeing the situation from the outside, the counselor can offer reflections, resources, and suggestions that may not have been apparent to the caregiver. With that often comes relief, tears and laughter, and life seems a bit brighter.

Southeast Senior Services invites caregivers to call the Senior and Caregiver Resource Center 463- 6177 or 1 (877)746-6177 to arrange for a counselor to call. Through a grant, the service is free of charge to caregivers of seniors 60 years of age and older.



Upcoming Events

JUNEAU

Juneau Family Caregiver Support Group - meets the 2nd Thursday of each month at noon at Resurrection Lutheran Church, located at 740 W. 10th Street. This month's meeting will take place **Thursday January 12**. For more information call the Caregiver Resource Center at 463-6177.

Juneau Family Caregiver Training - Meets the 4th Thursday of each month at noon at the downtown Juneau Public Library, which is **Thursday, January 22**. Look in local event calendars or call the Resource Center for the training topic.

Juneau Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Support Group - new group starting meetings on the last Wednesday of each month at the Juneau Moose Lodge (8335 Old Dairy Rd) at 6:30 p.m. First meeting is **Wednesday, January 25**. Contact TJ Arnold at 209-0516 for more information.

Wills and Trusts presentation by local attorneys Vance Sanders and Beth Chapman - 6:00—8:00 pm, **Thursday, February 23**, at Centennial Hall. Jointly presented by Southeast Alaska Independent Living and the Caregiver Resource Center.

ELSEWHERE IN SOUTHEAST

Ketchikan Family Caregiver Support Group - Ketchikan Senior Center. Contact Care Coordinator and Family Caregiver Support Specialist Bernice Metcalf at (907)225-8080 for information on this group.

Ketchikan Family Caregiver Training— “What is Respite Care?” with Community Connections and Rendezvous Adult Day Center. **Monday, January 9** from 6:00 to 7:00 at the Rendezvous Adult Day Center. Contact Care Coordinator and Family Caregiver Support Specialist Bernice Metcalf at (907)225-8080.

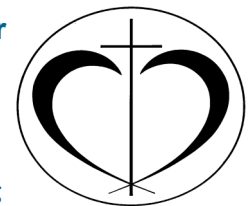
Wills and Trusts presentation by local attorneys Vance Sanders and Beth Chapman—6:00—8:00 pm, **Thursday, February 9**, at The Landing. Jointly presented by Southeast Alaska Independent Living, Community Connections, and the Caregiver Resource Center.

Sitka Family Caregiver Support Group - meets the third Wednesday of each month. For more information, please contact Brave Heart Volunteers at (907)747-4600.



This newsletter is published by the Senior Information & Caregiver Resource Center, 419 Sixth Street, Juneau, AK 99801.

To add or remove your name from our mailing list, email seniorinfo@ccsjuneau.org or call 463-6177 or toll free in Alaska 1-866-746-6177



Southeast Senior Services is a division of

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