

# The Family Caregiver

*I've just started to focus on just doing my best - sometimes that means being real and honest about what I need.*

*Caregiver Quote from Aging care.com*



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**"Needs? What needs? I don't have time to even think about my needs."**

This is the first line in the Introduction of the book, Soul Care for Caregivers: How to help Yourself While Helping Others by Susanne West. Ms. West writes from experience having watched her parents care for an adult son with mental illness and through her own journey as caregiver to her adult daughter who has several disabling conditions. She watched her mother's health deteriorate as a result of her undying love and commitment to her son. West describes caregiving as a "powerful transformational catalyst" in people and shares her experience and wisdom with others who are struggling to maintain their own physical and emotional health to the fullest degree.

The book is available at the ADRC and can be borrowed, or purchased at a reduced price. Please call 920-674-8136 to reserve a copy.

## What is respite care?



The term respite care means care that gives the regular caregiver some time off. Respite care gives family caregivers a much-needed break. In the process, respite care reduces caregiver stress. Respite care may be provided by:

- |                          |                          |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Home health care workers | Short-term nursing homes |
| Adult day-care centers   | Assisted living homes    |
| Friends                  | Volunteers               |

Call the ADRC if you are interested in learning more about respite care options that may give you that well-deserved break.

## Communication is Key

Communication is the key to success in most things: marriage, parenting, at work and even planning fun activities. When there is a lack of good communication, things inevitably go wrong. Relationships within a caregiving situation are no exception. Maintaining good communication with the person who is being cared for and other family members is the foundation of a healthy caregiver. There are three keys to good communication: speak clearly, listen carefully and respond accurately.

The first key is to **speak clearly**. First, when you are speaking it is important that you be specific with your request. Never assume the listener knows what you are thinking or feeling.

Second, try to stay focused and discuss only the issue at hand. We often get off track or bring up old issues, especially when strong emotions are involved. This can cause confusion and irritation.

Third, do your best to speak with tact. Be sensitive to the feelings of those listening and be descriptive rather than critical. Starting sentences with “I feel” or “I am” is less threatening to the listener and prevents the blame game.

The second key is **listening carefully**. The first step is to listen without interrupting or giving advice. Eliminate all distractions and concentrate on what the speaker is saying. It is best to listen and support the person before offering advice.

Second, listen with empathy. You don't have to agree with the other point of view to understand it. If you feel you are being criticized, receive it with an open mind and respond only to the facts, not the anger or fear behind it.

Third, listen to yourself and the tone with which you speak. Be aware of your body language, stay positive and speak calmly so you don't put the listener on the defensive.

The final key to good communication is **responding accurately**. It is important to be certain that you have heard the message correctly. Ask for clarification if there is anything you don't understand. Restate what you heard to be sure your interpretation is accurate. Pay attention to facial expressions, gestures and tone of voice to get a better understanding of the message. Even if you don't agree with what the speaker is saying, it is important to acknowledge that you understand how they are feeling.

No matter what you are trying to accomplish speaking clearly, listening carefully and responding accurately will help you achieve your goal. For caregivers, it is an essential step to a healthy caregiving environment.

Jane Mahoney  
Older Americans Act Consultant  
Greater Wisconsin Agency on Aging Resources

Listen with your...



### Caregiving Fact:

Almost one-quarter of American households provide care to relatives or friends age 50 or older.



## Educational Opportunities



### Alzheimer's Summit, Part II

The ADRC of Jefferson County and the Alzheimer's Association of South-eastern WI are hosting a follow up meeting to the Dementia Summit that was held on August, 2013.

The meeting will be held on Tuesday, May 13th at the Fort Atkinson Memorial Hospital in the Auditorium.

Since the last summit, the county has multiple task groups working on issues involving Alzheimer's disease - on those diagnosed and their caregivers. This interactive, learning experience will provide attendees with information about the various services and supports that are being developed. The following topics will be discussed:

- Person Centered Dementia Care;
- Dementia Friendly Communities;
- Promoting Early Detection;
- Increasing Public Awareness;
- Minimizing and creating successful care transitions;
- Emergency response (ER) placement facilities;

### REGISTRATION

There is no cost to attend this summit, but registration is required. Please call 920-675-4035.

### National expert on hospice and veteran's affairs offers insight to Caregivers

The 10<sup>th</sup> annual Rainbow Hospice Care End-of-Life Care Conference, is scheduled for Wednesday, March 12, at the Olympia Resort and Conference Center in Oconomowoc. The event, which runs from 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. will focus primarily on improving end-of-life care for veterans.

Delivering both the open and closing keynote presentations is Deborah Grassman, NP, CEO and co-founder of Opus Peace, a non-profit organization whose mission is to help people re-own and re-home lost pieces of self so wholeness can be restored. She is known as our country's foremost expert on hospice and veteran's affairs issues, having worked as a Hospice Director for the Department of Veterans Affairs for nearly 30 years, she gained unique and valuable insight into how military service can impact and complicate grief and bereavement.

The luncheon keynote, *Listening for Life, Love & Profit* will be presented by Ben Merens, a popular consultant, leadership training specialist, and speaker with extensive experience in broadcasting, organizational outreach, teaching, writing, program production, and communication management. Merens spent nearly 21 years at Wisconsin Public Radio and his work has aired on NPR's Morning Edition and PRI's Marketplace.

Attendees will also have the opportunity to participate in several interactive breakout sessions facilitated

by other regional experts in various clinical, psychosocial, and spiritual aspects of end-of-life care. Information about resources offered through veteran's organizations will also be available. Details about each topic and presenter can be found online at

[www.rainbowhospicecare.org](http://www.rainbowhospicecare.org). There will also be time set aside for networking, a book-signing, and opportunities to visit with exhibitors.

**Scholarships** are available through the National Family Caregiver Support Program. Please call the ADRC of Jefferson County to request one. The number to call is 920-674-8734.



### Spotlight On

#### Jefferson County Senior Dining

The Senior Dining Program serves people 60+ in congregate settings and via home delivered meals. Meals meet or exceed 1/3rd of the recommended daily dietary guidelines and are available to people who qualify in Jefferson, Rome/Sullivan, Waterloo, Lake Mills and Johnson Creek. There are private programs in Fort Atkinson and Watertown.

Home delivered meals are subject to an in-home need assessment. People who qualify are eligible for meals on a donation basis and the 2014 suggested donation is \$3.50. Eligible individuals will not be turned down if they can't donate.

For more information call 920-674-8134.