

FAMILY CAREGIVERS NEWSLETTER

CAN CAREGIVING MAKE YOU HAPPY?

When it comes to caring for a loved one, happiness may not be the first emotion that you would associate with a life role that many find overwhelming, frustrating, exhausting and time-consuming. Yet, as I researched more about happiness and how we go about creating the happy factor in our lives, it was apparent that many of the activities associated with caregiving are actually the principles that experts say will make us happier in our lives.

Following are five principles identified by Dr. Ian K. Smith in his book, Happy – Simple Steps to Get the Most Out of Life. I have taken his principles and added my own caregiving take on these tenets along with some tips on enhancing each of these ideas to create the maximum happiness along your caregiving journey.

1. Be kind, do something nice for someone, volunteer:

My tip: Be kind to yourself just like you are kind and caring to your loved one. Take the time to write yourself a thank-you letter for everything you do – the patience, the time, the love you are providing. Take this letter out and read it on days when you feel down or like you cannot go on. Congratulate yourself for the wonderful gift of caring – and the gift of volunteering – that you are giving.

2. Strengthen and deepen personal relationships:

The flip side of this happiness principle is carving out time to strengthen your other relationships. What researchers at Harvard University and the University of California at San Diego found is that our friendships actually can improve our happiness quotient. Their study showed that happiness is like a virus that spreads through social networks – your friends' happiness and even their friends' happiness can affect (or infect) you. The happiness of a first degree contact friend increases your happiness by 15 percent! **My tip:** Increase your happiness factor – carve out time to grab a coffee or go on a walk with a happy friend and feel your spirit uplifted.

3. Develop a spiritual life – practice forgiveness:

My tip: It is important that caregivers find experts: geriatric care managers, a therapist or caregiver support groups can all help you find ways to forgive the person you are caring for and forge new ways to cope when you get frustrated. Caregiving support groups can be a terrific resource on techniques on coping.

4. Spend money on someone else:

My tip: Ensure you talk to your financial planner or accountant about your caregiving responsibilities and especially about what you are spending out of your own pocket so they can help you save your nest egg. It may be that some of these costs can be covered under Medicare or Medicaid or you may even be able to qualify for tax credits if your loved one depends solely on you and other criteria you must meet to claim them as a dependent.

5. Be hopeful (the glass half full form of optimism):

My tip: One of the characteristics of an optimist is the power of their smile – remember how good you feel when someone smiles at you? You inevitably smile back and for a few seconds all seems right with the world. Even though you may be blue or having one of those days – try smiling. It is hard to be mad or sad when you have a smile on your face. Sonja Lyubomirsky, a researcher at the University of California at Riverside and who has long studied the health impacts of smiling, finds that people tend to mirror each other. Smiling is truly infectious – it catches on faster than the flu. You will be amazed how happy you are when you just smile.

*Tips were taken from a Blog By, Sherri Snelling - Alzheimer's Association @ alz.org—June 15, 2012

SUCCESSFUL AGING PROGRAM

Date: Tuesday, March 25, 2014

Time: 2:30pm–3:30pm (Refreshments will be served at 2:00pm)

Location: Mayo Clinic Health System—700 West Ave South—La Crosse, WI
Marycrest Auditorium—Hospital Building—Second Floor

Topic: **Explaining Stroke**—Find out how to detect a stroke, how a stroke can be prevented and more.
Kelli Tornstrom, RN BSN, Stroke Coordinator—Neurology Department, Mayo Clinic Health System

This monthly event is free and open to the public. The Successful Aging Program is brought to you by the Department of Geriatrics/Elder Services at Mayo Clinic Health System. For more information, or to be added to the mailing list call 608.392.9505 or 1-800-362-5454, extension 9505.



THE LUNCH BUNCH ~ MEMORY CAFÉ



The Lunch Bunch ~ Memory Café is a place to meet with other caregivers and their loved one in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere. Whether you are new to caring for a loved one with a chronic condition, have been providing care for several years, or have lost a loved one you have cared for—the Memory Café is for you!

Once a month the café offers a chance for everyone to step out of their daily roles and share a positive experience in a supportive environment. It's a place to listen, share and to learn from other caregivers who may be on a very similar caregiving journey.

Location, Date & Time: The Lunch Bunch ~ Memory Café meets at the Black River Beach Neighborhood Center in North La Crosse on the last Tuesday of each month from 11:30am—1pm. Lunch is available at a suggested donation of \$4 per person and an RSVP is encouraged.

Upcoming Dates: March 25th, April 29th, May 27th and June 24th

Caregiver Education: Each month a different local agency/service provider will be invited to briefly share information about their services. They will also be available to answer questions and visit with family caregivers during the café.

Arts & Music: Occasionally, art or special music may be featured at the café. Details will be announced on the monthly invites.

If you would like more information, or to be added to The Lunch Bunch ~ Memory Café mailing list, please contact **Amy Brezinka** at 608.785.3460 or abrezinka@lacrossecounty.org

~ FAMILY CAREGIVER RESOURCES ~

Resources for In-Home Haircuts:

Sue Snapp @ 788-0108 (Retired Hair Stylist – prefers to stay in La Crosse area)

LuAnn Freng @ 386-8587

(Hair Stylist at Springbrook Assisted Living—prefers to stay in La Crosse County area)

Grocery Deliver & Errand Service:

Friedman's Home Delivery Service

Therese Friedman, Personal Shopping Service

608.780.4010 or friedmanfam@juno.com

Charges \$15 fee per delivery

Run Your Errands (R.Y.E)

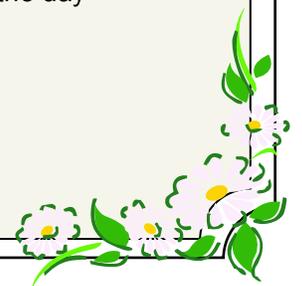
This is a small service that runs errands for folks at a very low cost.

Charges range from \$3-\$8 depending on the errand(s) and location.

R.Y.E. serves La Crosse, Onalaska, La Crescent, West Salem and Holmen.

Calls for errands can be made at any time to this local number: 608.498.3793 or by email at: ryeinlacrosse@gmail.com

Deliveries are made Mon. – Fri. between 1pm & 4pm. It's best to call in orders the day (24 hours) before the delivery is needed.



THE LA CROSSE COUNTY AGING UNIT

“Taking Care of You: Powerful Tools for Caregivers”

For those who care for loved ones with

- A stroke
- Alzheimer’s
- Parkinson’s disease
- Similar long-term conditions

You will develop skills and learn to

- Use tools to help reduce stress
- Communicate effectively with other family members
- Reduce guilt, anger, and depression
- Use techniques to relax
- Recognize the importance of self-care



This six week course is designed to assist family caregivers dealing with the challenges of caregiving. You can experience significant stress due to the decision making process in relation to aging parents, a spouse, partner, or friend. This may be compounded by separation or by distance.

NEXT COURSE OFFERED:

Mondays:

April 7, 14, 21, 28

May 5 & 12

3:00PM to 4:30PM

Onalaska Library

741 Oak Avenue South

Onalaska, WI

- **Pre-registration is necessary**
- **Registration Fee is \$10 (Scholarships are available)**
- **To Register, contact Amy Brezinka at 608.785.3460**



Respite Care:

If you need someone to be with your loved one so you can attend the sessions, please call us to make arrangements.

Sponsored by:

La Crosse County Aging Unit &
Caregiver Coach Program at
608-785-3460



The **La Crosse County Aging Unit** provides information and services that promote independence, and support the dignity of Seniors by allowing choices for living in and giving to their community.

Programs & Services include:

- Home-delivered Meals
- Meal Sites
- Elder Benefit Specialist
- Transportation
- Caregiver Coach Program
- Caregiver Support & Education
- Gifted Hands
- Senior Farmers' Market
- Nutritional Supplements
- Wellness & Prevention

The La Crosse County Aging Unit

400 4th Street North, Room 2260
 La Crosse, WI 54601-3200
 608.785.9710
www.co.la-crosse.wi.us/aging/

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C A R E G I V E R C O A C H P R O G R A M

Who Is A Family Caregiver? Husbands, wives, partners, sons, daughters, nieces, nephews, friends, and neighbors – also known as “family caregivers” – are typically the most important source of support to older people and adults with chronic or disabling conditions.

You Don't Have To Do It Alone! The Caregiver Coach will meet with the caregiver to listen and help identify what resources and support is needed. Together, they will create a plan designed to relieve stress by connecting the caregiver to the appropriate support and services.

The Caregiver Coach encourages the caregiver to discover a solution on their own, and offers a consistent, on-going relationship to help implement new skills, changes and goals over time. This program is **FREE** to family caregivers and/or care-receivers, age 60+, residing in La Crosse County.

For more information, contact **Amy Brezinka at (608)-785-3460.**



N E I G H B O R S D A Y 2 0 1 4



**Saturday, April 26, 2014
 8:00 AM—12:00 PM**

Neighbors Day is an event organized by the La Crosse Jaycees designed to help elderly and disabled in individuals in the city of La Crosse spruce up their homes for Spring!

If you are:

- Elderly or Disabled;
- AND live in the City of La Crosse;
- AND own your home;
- AND need assistance with raking your yard, trimming shrubs, turning your garden or washing outside windows...We can help YOU!
- Deadline: Request Forms must be postmarked *no later than April 11, 2014*

For questions or more information, please contact the La Crosse Jaycees at 608-791-1133

