

Don't let stress wear you down -- take care of yourself

If you're a caregiver, you need to learn to take care of yourself, too, or stress will wear you down.

That was the main message in a Caregiver Stress presentation by Tasha Beestman of the Alzheimer's Association Greater Wisconsin Chapter to the Alzheimer's caregiver support group in November.

That's easier said than done. Lots of people don't identify themselves as caregivers, but everyone in their circles – friends, family members, children – can be caregivers, even if they aren't full-time caregivers. That means everyone can have stress, too.

What causes stress for caregivers?

- Too many commitments
- Difficulty communicating
- Lack of time for self
- Planning for future care
- Legal/financial concerns
- Worry about the future
- Family conflicts
- Shift in roles
- Caregiver illness
- Lack of help from others
- Challenging behaviors
- Personal care for the individual
- Safety concerns

Caregiver resources

Alzheimer's Association online:
alz.org

24/7 helpline:
1-800-272-3900

Stress can exhibit itself in denial, anger, social withdrawal, anxiety, depression, exhaustion, sleeplessness, irritability, lack of concentration and health problems.

“Recognize (stress) for what it is as soon as possible,” Beestman said. “Sometimes giving a name to something helps.”



Other ways to manage stress include knowing what community resources are available; becoming an educated caregiver to know it's the disease and not your loved one acting this way or saying these things; getting help – even if you have to ask specifically for it; taking care of yourself mentally and physically; accepting changes; making legal and financial plans; giving yourself credit and not guilt; and visiting your doctor regularly.

“We forget about the good things that we do,” Beestman said. “We think about the one mistake we made.”

Caregivers might feel guilt over not doing as much as they think they should or not visiting their loved one every day if he or she is in a care facility. “It's OK not to go. If he's safe and happy, it's OK to have that break,” she said.

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Employee training, quiz

Nov. 30 was the deadline for employee training. Thank you to everyone who completed the state-required training on time.

We set the deadline to ensure everyone has time to get it done by the end of the year. Too often, we have too many people scrambling at the end of December to get it done.

Instead, it's better to do the training throughout the year, to better learn it and to put it into practice.

An employee suggested we do mini quizzes throughout the year to help keep employees on top of their game. The first employee to successfully complete this quiz will receive a small prize. Turn in your answers to Mystique by email: mystique@hilltopaffiliatesinc.com or put a time/date on your answers on paper and turn them in to the office. Good luck!

Standard precautions

1. To make sure your hands are truly clean, you need to wash them for at least 5 seconds. True or False
2. Which of the following is not a bloodborne disease: AIDS, influenza, Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C
3. A sneeze can transmit HIV. True or False
4. What is the most common way for bloodborne exposure to occur? Cuts from infected sharps, needlesticks or contact with mucous membranes
5. Always use hand sanitizer before preparing food, after using the restroom and when your hands are visibly dirty. True or False

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It's also so important to accept help or ask for help. "It's ridiculously hard to ask for help," Beestman said. "They see you are managing, so they don't help." But just because you are managing doesn't mean you shouldn't seek help. Often, if you ask someone specifically for something, they will help. Maybe it's bringing a meal once a week or once a month. Maybe it's asking someone to help with a household chore. It's also important to accept help when it's offered and not brush it off.

"We need to look at things as the glass is half full. To make that switch takes effort and time," she said.



Donation makes bistro greener

Neighbors of Hilltop Home Care manager Gail Hancock had a ficus tree that had outgrown their home and their church. They asked if we were interested in a tree for Hilltop Grand Village.

After trying the tree in several spots, we found a place where it looks good. It now brings more of the outdoors to our indoor street. Right now, it's home in the bistro, our sidewalk café.

Merry Christmas from all of us at Hilltop!

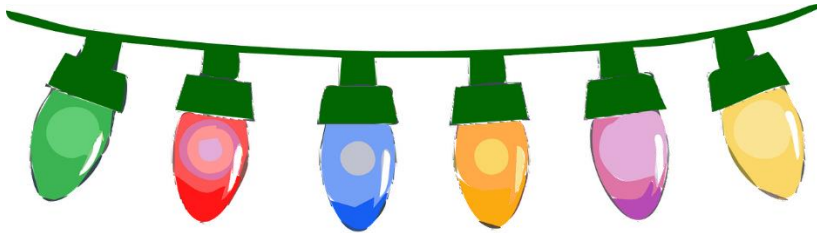


The Honeybees entertained with a holiday-themed sing-along at Alpine Terrace on Dec. 2. Even Santa got into the act with a little dance and jingle bells! We also enjoyed snacks and visiting.

Happy Birthday!

Would you believe we don't have any December birthdays? Looking ahead, we make up for it in January. Check back then!

Correction: David's birthday is Nov. 19. It was incorrectly listed in the November birthdays. We apologize for the error.



Holiday happenings

It's that time of year when communities plan Christmas celebrations.

Here is a sampling of events and activities. Make some time this season to visit one or more! They are sure to get you in the holiday spirit.

- ✱ Christmas Stories That Never Grow Old, 7:30 p.m. Dec. 9, 10, 15, 16, 17 and 2:30 p.m. Dec. 18. Wisconsin Rapids Community Theatre's original production features favorite Christmas stories and carols, told in skits, dance and music. This family friendly play is for all ages.
http://www.wrctheatre.org/InReview_Holiday2016.asp
- ✱ Rudolph's Country Christmas, Dec. 10. Breakfast with Santa, craft sale, children's games, gingerbread competition, dog sled pulls, horse and wagon rides, 5K run, parade, fireworks and more.
<http://www.rudolphcountrychristmas.org>
- ✱ Rotary Winter Wonderland, Marshfield Zoo, 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. nightly through Dec. 31. Choose walk- or drive-through options to see more than 1 million lights in a variety of displays. Bring a food pantry or cash donation.
<http://www.rotarywinterwonderland.com>

Find holiday cheer at support group

The Alzheimer's caregiver support group will hold a casual holiday party beginning at 9:30 a.m. Thursday, Dec. 8 at the Aging & Disability Resource Center.

Join us for refreshments and a time for sharing. Anyone who cares for someone with Alzheimer's or dementia or anyone wishing to learn more is welcome to attend.

If you need respite care for your loved one so you can attend, call Hilltop at 715-423-7400 to arrange free care during the meeting.

If you haven't visited a resource specialist at the Aging & Disability Resource Center, you might not know what you're missing. Betty Phillips of the ADRC will be the guest speaker at the Jan. 12 meeting. Mark your calendar to attend!

Upcoming memory cafes in Rapids

Memory cafes are for people with early stage dementia, mild memory loss or cognitive impairment and for family and friends of those affected.

Join us at 10:30 a.m. Friday Jan. 6 at McMillan Memorial Library for lively discussion, refreshments, camaraderie and fun. Call Tammy at 715-423-1700.

The Gilead Coffee House memory café is from 9:30 a.m. to 11 a.m. Dec. 13 and Jan. 10 at First English Lutheran Church. Call 715-423-2840 for information.