

Caregiver News You can Use!

Kenosha County Caregiver Coalition Newsletter for Caregivers

CAREGIVER CORNER

"Laughter and tears are both responses to frustration and exhaustion. I myself prefer to laugh, since there is less cleaning up to do afterward." —Kurt Vonnegut

Laughter is like a breath of fresh air that we desperately need. This seemingly simple act affects most of your body systems. Laughter strengthens the immune system by stimulating your body to increase production of immunoglobulin. It improves your heart rate and circulation by boosting the oxygen supply to your brain. Laughter controls pain by decreasing muscle tension, distracting attention, and increasing the production of endorphins, natural pain killers. Laughter is like giving yourself an internal massage as it stimulates and soothes. It truly is medicine for the heart.

Sometime when we feel inept, like a duck out of water, in our efforts to care for our loved one, the healthiest way to respond is to laugh at our own imperfections. We are human and at times say the wrong thing, spill soup down the front of the patient's shirt, or mess up at the most inopportune moment. But if we can't laugh, all we do is cry.

Humor, like prayer, helps us to rise above our circumstances. Seven years ago the idea of laughter was difficult for me to apply to the care of my terminally ill husband. Because I had worked as a registered nurse for over forty years, I was much too intent on fixing the symptoms of his illness and controlling his reactions to the chemotherapy and radiation. I was increasing not only my stress level, but also his.

Then as we turned on the TV and radio to some of his old favorites — "I Love Lucy," "Abbot and Costello," "All in the Family," and "Mayberry RFD," along with the music we grew up with, we began to laugh. Tensions faded, muscles relaxed, pain was lessened and we reconnected. Laughter reminded me that one is much more than his or her illness. We are all persons first, still alive and able to enjoy levity. Joy is still possible for the patient and the caregiver. *A sense of humor can help us overlook the unattractive, tolerate the unpleasant, cope with the unexpected, and smile through the unbearable.* —Moshe Waldoks

MAGGIE'S MARVELOUS MESSAGE

Guilt is one emotion we experience that we don't want to admit. "I shouldn't have snapped at mom", "I didn't get the dishes done again", "Why can't I handle this as well as my friend"? Something to remember is **all** caregivers experience guilt at some point. Exhaustion and comments made by family members and friends make us feel like we are failing. We need to remember to take care of ourselves first. Stop caring if the dishes aren't washed. Take a nap instead or use paper plates and plastic cutlery. Tell family and friends that you need them to give you a break. If they cannot or will not, don't listen to what they think because they don't know! Take a class (Powerful Tools for Caregivers) to manage stress and learn how to talk to others to get your needs met. Use Trualta to easily research topics important to your situation. Contact the ADRC to find available resources 262-605-6646. The best words to tell yourself and others? **"I am doing the best I can!"**

UPCOMING EVENTS

Family Caregiver Support Group (Virtual and in-person)

1st Thursday of every month, 4-5 p.m.

Powerful Tools for Caregivers (Virtual class)

6-weeks, Wednesdays, March 13-April 17
2-3:30 p.m. RSVP by March 11

Healthy Living with Diabetes (Virtual class)

6-weeks, Thursdays, March 21-April 25, 2-4 p.m.
RSVP by March 14

Caregiver Coffee Club (Virtual and in-person)

1st Wednesday of every month, 10-11 a.m.

Call the ADRC at 262-605-6646 for location, questions and to register.

Kenosha County **KCCC** Caregiver Coalition

Supporting all family caregivers through advocacy, education, service coordination and community planning.

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ADRC
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Aging & Disability Resource Center

