

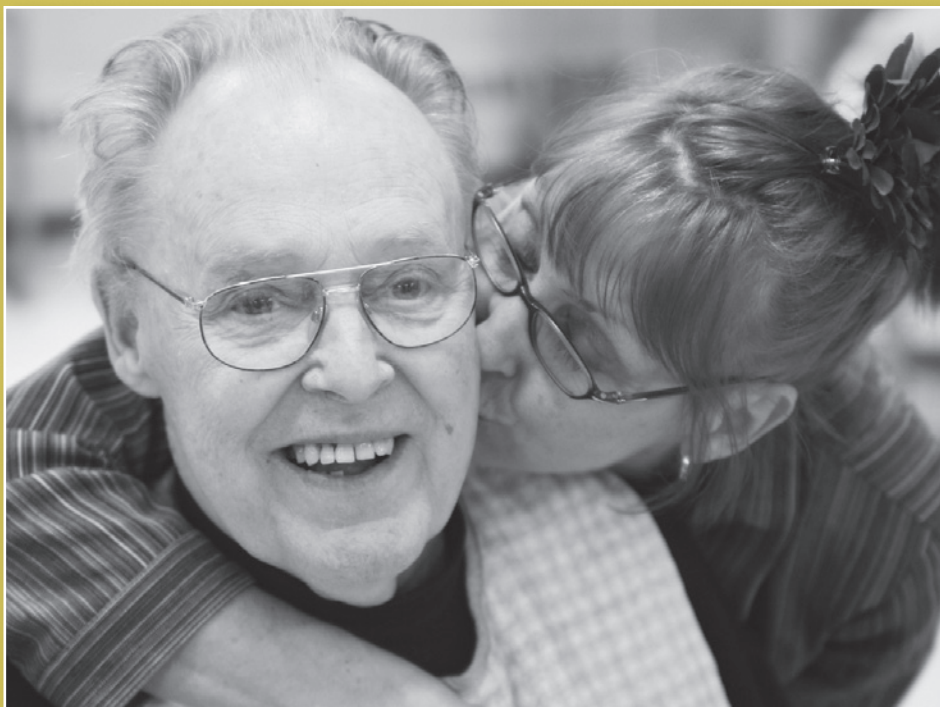
care SHARING

Summer 2010

Resources for Family Caregivers of Older Adults

www.overlakehospital.org/seniorcare

Editor: Alison Nesmith. For your free subscription to Caresharing call Overlake Hospital Senior Care at 425-688-5800 or email seniorcare@overlakehospital.org.



Caregivers find ways to acknowledge losses and move forward.

A different kind of grief

Most often when the term “loss” or “grief” is used, the assumption is that someone has died. However, when you are a caregiver, loss and grief are intimately bound up with the journey you and your loved one are on.

As your loved one loses physical or cognitive abilities it changes your relationship forever. While you are giving more and more care, you are witnessing your loved one's growing incapacity. Even if you are not fully aware of it, the

finality of each slight decline can cause stress and unacknowledged feelings of loss.

An Eastside caregiver who tended her mother who had Huntington's disease expressed it this way,

“Each time there was a change in my mother's situation – like her no longer being able to live on her own, or when she could no longer control her hands, or when she stopped recognizing me – were all events that created another separation in our relationship. I grieved over each of these changes and knowing she was moving farther away from me.”

Pauline Boss describes these losses as “ambiguous” for the caregivers because the loved one hasn't died, yet there is still a loss or absence in the relationship. In her book, *Ambiguous Losses*, she tells about one of her clients who described this process like a staircase: At the top of the staircase was when he learned of his wife's diagnosis, and each stair descending represented another loss. These losses were both social as well as physical, from his wife's no longer being able to travel to her becoming incontinent. Each step brought a new form of grief with the final loss being his wife's death. But each step also brought a plateau where he could grieve and then find a new way to continue.

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INSIDE: *Respite options • Keep moving*

Summer/Fall calendar:

Improve your balance • Skin cancer • Support groups

Although it may seem painful to acknowledge these gradual losses, it can allow a space for finding new meaning in your relationship with your loved one. The daughter of the Huntington's patient said, "After each loss I would still find hope and that would help me to continue on our journey."

Another Eastside woman who took care of her father who had dementia recalled, "Everyone told me that it was too much to look after my father and that it must be too hard to see him 'that way,' but even though it hurt every time he lost another ability to do something, like losing his ability to walk, or to know who I was, or to even recognize where he was, it was worth it. He brought me into this world with love and I was able to see him out of this world with that same love."

Acknowledging grief

As the caregivers quoted above discovered, being able to recognize your losses and acknowledge your grief often creates the possibility for hope and a way to go forward. Caregivers find many avenues for exploring the losses they are experiencing, whether it is through reading, reflecting, sharing with friends and family or seeking outside resources. Often, they participate in support groups.

Support groups can offer caregivers the space and time to talk about these transitions as well as find comfort from others who are going through similar situations. Many caregivers find it very

helpful to know that they are not alone on the journey and that there are others who can empathize with their circumstances. (More information on different types of support groups and how to contact them is contained in the box on this page and in our Support Groups listing on page 4.)

Finding a support group

There are many kinds of support groups, some of which may be more likely than others to focus on caregiver grieving. There are support groups for people coping with health issues from Alzheimer's Disease to vision loss. There are also non-condition-specific support groups. These "Caregiver Support Groups" provide forums in which to share feelings of loss. No matter what the subject area, most support groups are led by experienced, qualified facilitators and during the meetings participants share their experiences, learn from other members and exchange helpful tips on in-home strategies and local resources.

You will find some Caregiver Support Groups listed on our calendar (p.4). For a larger listing please consult our website www.overlakehospital.org/programs/seniorcare/resources or call us at 425-688-5800 to obtain our FREE publication: *Support Groups for Seniors on the Eastside*. If you would like to attend a group but can't leave your loved one alone, consider using respite care so that you can participate. (See article, page 3.)

Counseling and other resources

If a group situation feels like it may be uncomfortable, there are counselors who can work with you, one-on-one, to help you find

your path along your caregiving journey. One free source for this service is the **Geriatric Regional Assessment Team of Evergreen Healthcare** which provides Family Caregiver Counseling for adults who are unpaid primary caregivers of individuals 60 years of age or older. To be eligible for this service you must be a King County resident, in need of counseling related to your caregiving role and otherwise unable to access mental health services. For further information and other suggestions on locating a counselor who is experienced in helping people cope with the challenges and grief of caregiving, contact **Senior Care at 425-688-5800**.

Finally, if you would like to read more about living with the losses intrinsic in caregiving, you may find the following sources helpful:

- **Ambiguous Losses**, Pauline Boss, Harvard University Press, 1999 – available in local libraries and bookstores.
- **Senior Information and Assistance (206-448-5757)** www.seniorservices.org – click on "Getting Assistance" and then "Caregiving".
- **Alzheimer's Association – Washington Chapter** www.alzwa.org. Call 1-800-272-3900 to access a 24-hour helpline.

This article was written by Susan Dailey, BASW, of Overlake Hospital Senior Care.

Caregiver to Caregiver

Caresharing's Caregiver to Caregiver column asks you to write in about the challenges you are facing and/or the strategies that work for you.

Question: What strategies do you use to be sure your loved one takes his/her medication?

One of the first strategies people use is to buy a medicine tray that has everyday of the week and time of day. This often helps



to keep the order of medication intact and ensures that you take the medicine everyday.

To assist someone who does not want or can't remember to take his/her medicine, one caregiver suggests making it a participatory activity. Whether you just pretend

or actually have to take medication, making it an activity you do together, may cut down on forgetting and resistance.

Our question for next time: What tips or strategies do you have for getting your loved one around to doctors' appointments, errands etc?

Please send in your caregiving quandaries, tips, or answers to the questions above by emailing us at seniorcare@overlakehospital.org or dropping a line to the address noted in the box below.

A much-needed respite

Summer is the season for vacations and while you may no longer be able to take a trip with your loved one, you can still find ways to take a break. Respite care offers relief from the daily chores of caregiving while also providing the assurance that your loved one is receiving good care. Investing in your own health helps both you and your loved one in the long run and can provide stimulation and new friends for your loved one as well. The various options include:

- **Nursing homes and some assisted living communities** offer temporary care for a period of days or weeks, which allow caregivers to take vacation breaks. Base costs may range from \$100 - \$175 a day.
- **Many private agencies** provide in-home care that may be covered if you have a long-term care insurance policy.
- **The Seattle King-County Respite Care Program** (425-899-3200) offers relief for caregivers who provide fulltime care to the elderly or people

with a disability and are unpaid for their work. This program, paid for on a sliding scale basis, is very flexible and can be used to provide respite on a regular basis or just occasionally.

These are just a few of the options. Overlake Senior Care publishes a **FREE CareSharing Directory of Respite Care Services on the Eastside** that will help you get started on finding the best services for your needs. Call **425-688-5800** to receive your copy.

Keep in touch

Share your comments, questions, family photos and thoughts about caregiving. Call us at **425-688-5800**, email seniorcare@overlakehospital.org or drop a line to:

**Senior Care - Caregiver to Caregiver,
Overlake Hospital Medical Center,
1035 116th Avenue NE, Bellevue WA
98004.**

Walking work-out

Looking for a new way to start your day? How about an energizing walk around Bellevue Square Mall?

Three days a week scores of Eastside seniors take part in Walk for Life, a free ongoing program that promotes safe and effective exercise. Walk for Life provides the chance to get a good cardio work-out in a protected environment – warm in the winter, cool in the summer and always dry. It also allows participants to meet up with friends and benefit from expert staff that is on site for information, advice and monitoring.

Walk for Life takes place every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday morning, 8 to 9:30 a.m. Participants start at Skybridge 4, where they register with the Walk for Life leader and take off to circle the Mall 1, 2 or more times. No advanced registration is required – just show up in your walking shoes. For more information, call **Overlake Senior Care at 425-688-5800.**

CALENDAR

Summer/Fall 2010

CLASSES

Unless otherwise noted, classes cost \$5.

Improve and Maintain Your Balance

Led by exercise physiologist Mia Barbera, these classes will help you strengthen key muscle groups; improve use of the core muscles; build a balanced, elegant posture; and gain confidence in your stability allowing you to move with grace and agility. Registration is required by calling 425-688-5800.

When: Tuesdays, September 14, 21 and 28, 2 - 3 p.m., (\$25 for a 3-class session) or
Wednesdays, October 20 & 27, November 3 & 4, (\$35 for a 4-class session)

Where: Bellevue College, North Campus, 10700 Northup Way, Bellevue (corner of 108th Avenue NE. and Northup Way)

Therapeutic Yoga to Maintain Balance

The Yoga Barn breath-oriented practice will help to increase your circulation, release tense muscles, strengthen core muscles and help to keep each muscle and joint flexible and strong. Yoga is done in a seated position on a chair with exercises adapted to each individual's abilities. Introductory classes are held Tuesdays, continuing classes are Thursdays. The cost of a six-class session is \$69. Registration required by calling 425-688-5800.

When: Introductory classes are Tuesdays, September 14 through October 19, or October 26 through December 14, from 11 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. Continuing classes are Thursdays, September 16 through October 21, or October 28 through December 16, 11 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.

Where: Same as above.

Living Wills

Does your family know your wishes? Learn how to develop your own advanced directives for health care with John Shaw, PhD. The class includes "Starting Points," an Overlake workbook for creating living wills, durable

power of attorney and values statements. Registration required by calling 425-688-5800.

When: Thursday, September 30, 10 a.m. - noon
Where: Same as above.

Incontinence Doesn't Have to Be Part of Growing Older

It's estimated that over 13 million Americans - more than two-thirds of them women - suffer from urinary incontinence. An Overlake urologist will discuss the different types of incontinence and the latest successful treatment options available. Cost is \$6 for Bellevue residents and \$7 for non-residents. To register call 425-452-7681 and mention class number 51160.

When: Monday, September 27, 1 - 2:30 p.m.
Where: North Bellevue Community Center, 4063 148th Ave. NE, Bellevue

How to Eat a Low Cholesterol Diet

De-mystify the HDL, LDL, good cholesterol - bad cholesterol jargon and learn how to eat well while cutting fat from your diet. Class is FREE and no registration required. For information, call 425-746-9900.

When: Wednesday; September 8, 11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Where: Redmond Senior Center, 8703 160th Ave. NE, Redmond

Skin Cancer: Prevention, Detection and Treatment

Recognizing and detecting skin cancer at its earliest stages can slow or even stop the disease from progressing. An Overlake physician will review lifestyle habits that can reduce your risk of developing cancer and offer an overview of current treatments options available if cancer does develop. Class is FREE and registration required by calling 425-556-2314.

When: Wednesday, September 15, 10 - 11:30 a.m.

Where: Redmond Senior Center, 8703 160th Ave. NE, Redmond

SUPPORT GROUPS

Alzheimer's Caregivers Group, 1st Thursday each month, 3:00-4:30 pm, Community Center at Mercer View. Call 206-230-0166.

Adult Children Caregivers Support Group, 3rd Wednesday each month, 6:30-8:00 pm, Northshore Senior Center. Call 425-487-2441.

Alzheimer's Family Support Group, 3rd Monday each month, 3:00-4:30 pm, Overlake Senior Health Center. Call 425-688-5807.

Caregivers of Older Adults Support Group, 2nd and 4th Thursday each month, 3:00-4:30 pm, Overlake Senior Health Center. Call 425-688-5807.

Caring for Someone with Memory Loss, 3rd Thursday each month, 10:00-11:30 am, Northshore Senior Center. Call 425-487-2441.

Family Caregiver Support Group, 2nd Tuesday each month, 3:00-4:30 pm, Mercer Island Senior Health Center. Call 425-688-5637.

Grief & Loss Support Group for loss of loved one due to cancer, 2nd and 4th Thursday each month, 6:00-7:30 pm, Overlake Hospital Medical Center. Call 425-688-5586.

Grief & Loss Support Group, 2nd Thursday each month, 1:00-2:30 pm, Community Center at Mercer View. To register, call Betsy Zuber at 206-275-7752.

Low Vision Support Group, 4th Thursday each month, 1:30-3:00 pm, Community Center at Mercer View. Call 206-230-0166.

Parkinson's Caregivers Group, 3rd Monday each month, 7:00-8:30 pm, Community Center at Mercer View. Call 206-230-0166.

Parkinson's Support Group, 1st and 3rd Tuesday each month, 2:00-3:30 pm, Community Center at Mercer View. Call 206-230-0166.

Stroke Support Group, for stroke survivors and caregivers meets the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Monday each month, 1:00-2:30 pm, St. Andrew's Lutheran Church. Call 425-746-8396.

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www.overlakehospital.org/seniorcare



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