



The Family Caregiver

Newsletter of the Lewis-Mason-Thurston Family Caregiver Support Program

Fall 2020

And then it was fall...ah the crisp air

Social isolation is and has been a reality for many of us who may be living alone or caring for a family member. Social isolation has also been a topic of concern and research long before COVID-19 and the Stay-at-Home orders. It is also subjective, like the old saying, 'feeling alone in a room full of people.' Caregivers, does this sound familiar?

The common reality for caregivers is social isolation. As you spend more time caring for a family member, you have less time and energy for socializing, or even polite conversation. Your non-caregiving friends often have less of an ability to understand your life as a caregiver. Even close friends and confidants may find it difficult to relate to what you are doing for a family member.

In preparing this newsletter, we reviewed many research and popular articles on social isolation and found very few specifically about caregivers. Not surprised, are you? The articles broadly describe social isolation as either objective or subjective. Objective isolation is a physical separation, such as living alone. Subjective isolation is feeling the distress of being alone. More caregivers fall into the subjective category.

For former caregivers or non-caregivers, social isolation may result from simply outliving your social connections, friends, and family members. Or perhaps it is a natural consequence after a move to live near an adult child. But lost are your old church friends, longtime hairdresser, and even your favorite grocery store clerk. The feeling of social isolation may surprise you even after a short illness or a surgery which may leave you less able to rejoin the walking club or concentrate on a game of bridge.

Maybe you will reconnect when you are able to rejoin social activities, but it does take effort. It takes energy to reconnect and resume relationships, especially for those who are more introverted.

Why is it important to connect? According to researcher and author Brené Brown, "Connection is the Energy that is created between people when they feel seen, heard, and valued. And when they can give and receive without judgement."

Continued

It is important to acknowledge that reconnecting after such events may be different, because you are different. Caregiving for years likely has changed you. You may also find your tastes have changed for certain conversations, people or activities. It is natural that our minds, hearts, or connections can change after experiencing life events such as caregiving or a brush with death.

Do not be distressed when what was once entertaining, no longer is. Golf may no longer have that swing. Maybe you fancy a good walk, uninterrupted by concentrating on hitting a ball.

Here are some questions to help you begin to reconnect:

1. What are the last social things you did, but no longer do because of caregiving duties? Take a moment. What were they? Did you lose interest? Was it because it was a couples' activity and your spouse can no longer participate?
2. What social activity could you still do now while being a caregiver? A quick walk while mom naps? Would respite care allow you to quilt with friends?
3. What is your dream getaway or rejuvenating activity? It is important to have a dream. A big one. Big dreams help us focus on our priorities. Or even just remember them, while we squeeze in the time for smaller rewarding conversation or activities, to help us reconnect.

The answers to these questions may give you some clues about where to start, what to do, and how to keep your dreams alive. (Looking for more ideas, use "the Google" to help you search.)

When it comes to social isolation due to caregiving, one of our former clients offered this advice, **"Connect. Connect to yourself. Connect to your family. Connect to your community. Connect."**



"Connection is why we are here. We are hardwired to connect with others, it's what gives purpose and meaning to our lives, and without it there is suffering."

Brené Brown

Caregiver Prepping

You know that moment when the lights flicker, followed by darkness and then silence as the refrigerator stops humming and furnace fan quiets? Next you think “where is the flashlight? . . . Where is Mom?” “Ok get the candles, ooh, Mom might knock them over now. Flashlight, but where are the batteries?”... and it goes from there. To avoid that panicked feeling, preparedness experts suggest creating a plan. (Otherwise it would not be called prepping.) In case you are overwhelmed by even the thought of one more thing to do, we will keep it simple and focus on sheltering in place with adequate supplies for someone who is caring for a family member.

To help you create a plan, the following links provide checklists and inspiration. If you are someone who has put provisions aside, they are good review for what you have, especially your needs as a caregiver. www.fema.gov, www.redcross.org and www.ready.gov.

Now that you have your plan, lists and current inventory, there is one more secret weapon for prepared caregivers, especially if space is an issue. The Front Hall Closet. Actually, it’s the transformation of your Front Hall Closet into a Food Haul Cache. Unless your front hall closet has had a recent makeover, it is likely filled with infrequently worn coats and hiking boots, with nowhere to go. The average front hall closet for a 1990 vintage home measures 5’ by 2.5’, approximately 100 square feet of storage. Or 3 minivan loads from Costco.

After you completely empty the front hall closet’s contents, enlist the help of a grandson or friend who is handy with a drill and level to add some shelves. Just leave the bottom open for larger, heavy items, like several cases of bottled water. The sturdy first shelf is perfect for heavy canned goods: canned chicken, beans and veggies. Select items you would actually eat and close to the diet you need for your health. Remember, these are temporary food items.

The next shelves are waiting for your toiletries, baby wipes, and OTC medications to keep you clean and comfortable in an emergency. The FEMA or Red Cross lists will help guide your choices for the remaining shelves. Just remember the caregiving supplies you need semi-regularly or when your caregiver has a bout of something. Perhaps some extra Depends, Pedialyte, and Imodium. The top shelf is perfect for light items. Perhaps you can squeeze some Charmin on the top shelf. (Sorry, that was too easy). We don’t want to be caught without, like in the early days of COVID. And don’t forget paper towels, tissues, and gloves.

So that items stay fresh, expiration dates can be noted on a list taped to the inside of the closet door or noted with a Sharpie on the top of the cans. Replenish the food as they near their expiration dates. Dine on the rotated items or donate to the food bank.

After you fill your closet, you will have a second secret caregiving weapon: the sense of security and accomplishment for having more than just a pantry full of food and supplies. This is like a long-term savings account or life insurance you hope never to use. And remember: **“Luck favors the prepared.” Richard Hamming, mathematician.**

alzheimer's association®

October Educational Webinars

10 Warning Signs of Alzheimer's

Oct. 1, 10-11:30 a.m.

Oct. 6, 3-4:30 p.m.

COVID-19 and Caregiving

Oct. 27, 10-11:30 a.m.

Dementia Conversations

Oct. 20, 10-11:30 a.m.

Effective Communication Strategies

Oct. 2, 3-4:30 p.m.

Oct. 28, 2-3:30 p.m.

Healthy Living for Your Brain and Body

Oct. 13, 12-1:30 p.m.

Oct. 21, 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m.

Legal and Financial Planning

Oct. 7, 1-3:30 p.m.

Living with Alzheimer's: For Caregivers

Middle Stage

Part 1: Oct. 5, 10 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Part 2: Oct. 12, 10 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Living with Alzheimer's: For Caregivers

Late Stage

Oct. 19, 9-11:30 a.m.

Understanding Alzheimer's and Dementia

Oct. 15, 3-4:30 p.m.

Understanding and Responding to Dementia
Related Behavior

Oct. 22, 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Oct. 26, 10-11:30 a.m.

All sessions here are listed in Pacific Daylight Time,
online listings may be different; please note time zone.

**TO LEARN MORE OR TO REGISTER,
PLEASE CALL 800.272.3900 OR VISIT US ONLINE AT ALZWA.ORG/EDUCATION**

**We are now meeting via Zoom!!
Contact us for the zoom link to attend.**

"Come with questions, leave with answers."



In SHELTON:	Second Wednesday of the month from 1-3 PM	(360) 427-2226 x102
In CHEHALIS:	Second Thursday of the month from 1-3 PM	(360) 748-2524 x102
In OLYMPIA:	Third Thursday of the month from 1-3 PM	(360) 664-3162 x102



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For an online copy of this newsletter please visit our website at www.LMTAAA.org
