

Pathways

SERVING FAMILIES AND CAREGIVERS OF BRAIN IMPAIRED ADULTS AND THE FRAIL ELDERLY

How Much Longer Can I Do This?

Stefani R. Wilson, MS, MFT



YOU MAY HAVE uttered these words aloud or just whispered silently in your mind as you wash another set of bedsheets or return home after finding your loved one wandering down the street (again). There are many reasons family caregivers find themselves wondering how much longer they can continue caring for a loved one as the journey can be long and exhausting. Chances are the situation has changed significantly since this journey began with a diagnosis and their dependence on you is becoming more than any one person can tolerate.

Many caregivers express concern about the promises they made to their loved ones, or even their own sense of obligation, which leads to our conversation today: betrayal. The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines betrayal as an action "to hurt (someone who trusts you, such as a friend or relative) by not giving help or by doing something morally wrong." In this context, the only betrayal I have observed in working with family caregivers is to oneself. To allow your own health and well-being (as well as

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Pathways

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How Much Longer . . . , continued from page 1

relationships) to be compromised in this chapter of your life is a betrayal to the rest of your family, friends, and colleagues. Hopefully, most understand how these sacrifices are “part of the job” yet we need to remember the value of our own self-worth and how burnout indicates the need for re-balancing our priorities.

Self-care is an ongoing conversation that includes listening to our inner voice whispering “How much longer can I do this?” Let’s pay attention to this voice and take the following steps with “Mary” (Bonus points: Write down your answers or share with a friend or family member):

STEP 1: REALISTICALLY, HOW MUCH LONGER CAN YOU DO THIS WITHOUT MAKING ANY CHANGES?

Be specific—two days (something needs to change now), two weeks (something needs to change very soon), or two months (something will need to change). For example, Mary’s doctor is concerned about the toll caregiving for her husband is taking on her physical and emotional health. Mary describes how she doesn’t know how much longer her body will let her keep doing this and she doesn’t want to involve her children yet.

STEP 2: WHAT IS THE MOST CHALLENGING PART OF BEING A CAREGIVER RIGHT NOW?

What one change would be a relief? Mary has to cajole her husband to take a bath since the dementia affects his ability to understand the need for this now (emotionally exhausting for Mary) and he is six foot tall and needs her support in/out of the shower (physical strain, affects her arthritis and blood pressure).

STEP 3: HOW WOULD THIS BENEFIT YOU AND/OR YOUR LOVED ONE (BY REMOVING THIS CHALLENGE OR MAKING THIS CHANGE)?

Mary’s exhale is worth a thousand words as she imagines how life could be different with bathing assistance and taking this task off her list. This step oftentimes reveals the anxiety she experiences when it’s time for his shower and she becomes even more aware of why she feels mentally and physically exhausted (and this is only one of the many tasks Mary helps her husband with!).

STEP 4: RESEARCH OPTIONS, PICK ONE, AND TRY IT ON!

This step is a big one after reflecting on what needs to change and why since this will likely require asking for help and making a change. Mary and I explored the bathing assistance options (e.g., inviting a family member, private individual, or in-home care agency to assist with bathing) and Mary decided to hire a local in-home care agency who provides a bathing service (once per week) and even offered to run the vacuum and change the linens during their shift. She doesn’t need to “bother her family” and they can start next week!

STEP 5: MAKE A DATE: Mark your calendar 2 months from today to re-evaluate whether this step is working for you and identify any adjustments that would make it ideal. Mary didn’t have to wait two months to know this was a positive change for she AND her husband. In fact, he was much more amenable to the shower with the professional caregiver (giving her peace of mind) and Mary was able to give herself permission to consider meeting her friends for lunch and having fun! After walking through these steps, Mary has reduced her risk of caregiver burnout by creating this relationship with another person who cares for her husband and the tasks that drain her energy.

As we consider taking steps into new territory (such as asking for help from others), it’s important to breathe and remember that these changes can be adapted or even reversed if “it doesn’t fit.” The ultimate goal is to reduce the physical, mental and emotional stress for you, the family caregiver, which will benefit the person you are caring for tremendously. Whether you decide to invite a family member/friend to help, contact an in-home care agency (e.g., help with bathing and light housekeeping), enroll your loved one in an adult day program, or contact a placement agency to assist with finding the best care home to meet your loved one’s needs—just considering the step then taking action is all that is needed; this will give you the answer to the question that began this conversation. *“How much longer can I do this?”*

Revenge of the Caregivers

Alzheimer's disease.
I name you and defy you.
You are a witch
That shapes people into animals,
Loved ones into strangers,
Time into a Thief.
But your spell can be broken
With each act of love,
Each commitment to care.
I have conquered you many times.
Your days are numbered.

From: Kakugawa, F. (2002). Mosaic Moon: Caregiving through Poetry. Watermark Publishing. Honolulu: HI. p. 212.

INVITATION TO CONTRIBUTE TO CAREGIVER'S COLUMN

Please feel free to submit your contribution to email address. It is best to type your review in a Microsoft Word document. Be sure to include the title, author, a brief description, and mention how this was beneficial for you. The newsletter editor may need to make changes to your submission for various reasons, including spelling/grammar check and to adjust article to meet spacing requirements.

Community Resource Available in Placer County

Attention Placer County Residents 60 and Older, You May Qualify for a Free Medication Assessment!

About the Program:

- Medications are reviewed for conflicts, duplications
- Nurse & Pharmacist Recommendations are provided
- We can visit you in your home and a follow-up visit is provided.

This program:

- Helps reduce medication related errors
- Is designed to keep you independent, informed, and out of the hospital
- Helps reduce falls, dizziness, or confusion related to medication errors

For more information call Caring Choices at 1-866-703-3873. This program is funded through a grant from the Agency on Aging, Area 4.

A Dose of Inspiration



“The simple act of caring is heroic.”

EDWARD ALBERT

“It is not how much you do, but how much love you put in the doing.”

MOTHER TERESA

“Kindness can transform someone's dark moment with a blaze of light. You'll never know how much your caring matters. Make a difference for another today.”

AMY LEIGH MERCREE



11th Annual Cook-off and Fundraiser, benefiting Del Oro Caregiver Resource Center

Date: Thursday, June 16, 2016

Time: 5:00 – 8:00 p.m.

Location: Divine Savior Catholic Church
9079 Greenback Lane
Orangevale, CA

Please join us for this festive event featuring a cook-off by local chefs, live entertainment, silent auction and raffle prizes!

To purchase tickets please visit <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/11th-annual-cruise-around-the-world-cook-off-and-fundraiser-tickets-19190960680> or call Del Oro Caregiver Resource Center at (916)728-9333

Name _____ Organization _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Number of Tickets _____ x \$35.00 = \$ _____ Package of 10 tickets for \$300.00 = \$ _____

Reserved table for 10 \$350.00= \$ _____

How would you like your tickets? Mailed to the address above Will call at the door

Make Check Payable to: Del Oro Caregiver Resource Center, 8421 Auburn Blvd., Suite 265, Citrus Heights, CA 95610.

On January 1, 2016, the Hospital and Family Caregiver Act (SB 675 – Liu) became effective.

THIS IMPORTANT LAW, signed last year by Governor Jerry Brown (Chapter 494, Statutes of 2015), recognizes the critical role family caregivers play in our health care system by helping to keep their loved ones out of costly institutions.

We are a strong supporter of this new law to ensure that California's 4.4 million family caregivers are aware of their rights under this new law. We are especially focused on the following important elements. Hospitals must:

- Upon admission of a patient, record the name of the family caregiver who will assist with post-discharge care;
- Notify that family caregiver when the patient is to be discharged to another facility or to home;
- Provide an opportunity for the patient and his or her designated caregiver to, in a culturally-appropriate manner, participate in the discharge planning process, and to obtain information and/or instruction for post-discharge care, including the administration of medications, and;
- Provide contact information for health care, community resources, and other services necessary to successfully carry out the care plan.

Thank you to Senator Liu for authoring this Bill and for your continued support of Family Caregivers.

SAVE THE DATE

MARK YOUR CALENDARS! for the Annual Alzheimer's Association Education Conference

Thursday, May 19, 2016
9 am — 4 pm
Sacramento Convention Center
1400 J Street
Sacramento, CA 95814



Interested in Sponsorship and Exhibitor opportunities for the 2016 conference? Call or email our Program Director, Denise Davis at denise.davis@alz.org or 800.272.3900

Our annual education conference is designed to fit the needs of families caring for a loved one with Alzheimer's disease or related dementia. It is also for professionals who would like to learn more about Alzheimer's disease, the challenges and hope for the future. We have exciting new topics and speakers for this year.

alzheimer's  association®

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Have you recently placed a loved one in a care facility?

As a caregiver, placing a loved one in a care home is a difficult time. Carol Kinsel, GCM, and Stefani R. Wilson, MS, MFT, invite you to join the conversation on Coping with the Care Home Transition, on March 30, 2016 from 1-4:00 p.m. We will explore the emotions surrounding placement and discuss strategies to promote a smooth transition before and after "the move." In order to address individual concerns, we are keeping the group small and recommend you register by calling (916) 965-5565.

May is Older American's Month

MAY IS A MONTH OF FRESH BEGINNINGS.

Perennials bloom once again, blazing a trail of bright color. May is also when we celebrate Older American's Month (OAM), acknowledging the perennial contributions of older adults to our nation. The 2016 OAM theme is Blaze a Trail. OAM offers a perfect opportunity to raise awareness about important issues facing older adults. Be a trailblazer! Join us in promoting activities, inclusion, and wellness for older Americans in your community.



BIG DAY OF GIVING  **OF**  **MAY 3**

WE HOPE YOUR HEART is with Del Oro Caregiver Resource Center! Starting at midnight on May 3rd, Del Oro will participate in the Sacramento region's BIG Day of Giving—a 24 hour giving challenge that lifts up lives. In its third year, the BIG Day of Giving has raised nearly \$9 million for nonprofits serving our region. Join the community on May 3rd for a celebration of philanthropy and put your money where your heart is! Visit the Big Day of Giving website at www.bigdayofgiving.org.

Thank You

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Area 4 Agency on Aging

California State Department of Health Care Services



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**For information or assistance, contact Del Oro CRC at (800) 635-0220
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