



Fall 2016

Caregiver Quarterly Newsletter



VA HEALTH CARE Defining EXCELLENCE in the 21st Century

Caregiver Wellness Issue

Dear Family Caregivers,

The Caregiver Support Program team has created the Fall 2016 Caregiver Quarterly Newsletter to highlight how much your health matters to us. Our goal this issue is to bring you information and inspiration to support you in living a healthy and balanced life, in your role as a Caregiver and as an individual. We hope each of you will be able to attend this year's Caregiver Conference (see invite below)!



UPCOMING EVENTS

WELLNESS CAFÉ IS BACK!

October: Meditation

November: Healing Touch

December: Self Reflection & Journaling

When: 4th Wednesday of each month; 1:00 p.m.-2:00 p.m.

Where: VA Salem Clinic

1750 McGilchrist Street SE
Suite 130, Room 1C-100-B
Salem, Oregon

When: 1st Thursday of each month; 10:00 a.m.-11:00 a.m.

Where: Vancouver Campus

VA Portland Health Care System
1601 E 4th Plain Blvd.,
Columbia Room
Vancouver, Washington

**Learn more about Wellness Café on page 2*

****RSVP to Maria Loebach, RN at maria.loebach@va.gov or 503-729-0781.**

YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED TO: The 5th Annual Family Caregiver Conference "Unsung Heroes"

WHEN:

Friday, November 18, 2016

9a.m. - 3p.m.

WHAT:

Special Guest Speakers
Interactive Caregiver Discussions
Healing Touch &
Resource fair

WHERE:

VA Portland Health Care System Vancouver Campus
With video teleconferencing at the Bend & Salem Clinics!

To RSVP please call **503.273.5210** by November 7, 2016
Conference, refreshments & parking are **free**.



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

WELLNESS CAFÉ IS BACK!

by Maria Loebach,
RN, HTP-A

"It's not selfish to love yourself, take care of yourself, and to make your happiness a priority. It's necessary." – Mandy Hale

The Caregiver Wellness Café will be resuming this Fall in both Salem and Vancouver. Family Caregivers of Veterans play an important role in supporting the health and well-being of Veterans, and the Caregiver Support Program is dedicated to supporting the health and well-being of Family Caregivers. Research shows that caregiving can impact one's health negatively due to the stressors Caregivers face on a daily basis. Thus, it is important for Caregivers to find a way to integrate self-care activities into their daily lives to maintain their own health and well-being. The Wellness Café is designed to provide education and support around learning self-care practices and to create a space for Caregivers to connect with each other. Some techniques explored in the Wellness Café are various forms of meditation, Healing Touch, guided imagery, self-reflection, and journaling. Prioritize self-care and check out a Café!

* See Wellness Café schedule on Page 1 in Upcoming Events.

**RSVP to Maria Loebach, RN at maria.loebach@va.gov or 503-729-0781.

Caregiver Health Matters

by Kyong Yi, LCSW



Caregivers play a critical role in the health and long term care of Veterans. Multiple studies confirm how much our society has come to rely on family members, friends and other loved ones to provide care across all populations. While caregiving can be rewarding and positive, many Caregivers experience substantial physical, psychological and financial stressors. These stressors can lead to increased risk of physical ailments and disease, as well as depression and other emotional challenges.

Studies on the mental and physical health of Caregivers have found:

- Caregivers are at a greater risk for becoming depressed. Studies estimate that 40 to 70% of Caregivers report symptoms of depression.
- Caregivers are more likely to be diagnosed with an anxiety disorder.
- Caregivers are also at increased risk for developing a substance abuse problem.
- Caregivers report feeling less well and have poorer overall physical health than non-caregivers.
- Caregivers are more likely to report a personal history of high blood pressure, obesity, bodily pain, diabetes and higher levels of cholesterol.
- Caregivers report chronic conditions (including heart attack/heart disease, cancer, diabetes and arthritis) at nearly twice the rate of non-caregivers (45 vs. 24%).

Due to the high demands of caregiving, Caregivers often find it difficult to engage in activities that promote their own health and well-being. For example, nearly three quarters (72%) of Caregivers reported that they had not gone to the doctor as often as they should, and more than half (55%) had missed doctors' appointments. Caregivers in rural areas are at a greater disadvantage for having their own medical needs met due to difficulty getting to the hospital and doctor.

Increasing appropriate mental health services and medical care for family Caregivers are important steps toward addressing Caregiver health. Although caregiving can have a negative impact on Caregivers' health and well-being, research demonstrates its effects can be alleviated at least partially by:

- *An assessment of family caregiver needs that leads to a care plan with support services*
- *Caregiver education and support programs*
- *Respite to reduce caregiver burden*
- *Financial support to alleviate the economic stress of caregiving*
- *Primary care interventions that address caregiver needs*

Talk with one of the Caregiver Support Program staff for support on ways to increase your health!

Are You Ready to Stop Looking at Your Phone Every 2 Minutes?

by Judy Ulibarri, RN, BSN

Would you like some help developing a new habit? Do you recognize how much time per day you spend *with your phone*, and *you are not talking with anyone*? Is your phone the first thing you reach for in the morning, when you are stopped at a red light or when you come into the house? Our brains have become used to looking at our phones checking for email, Facebook, and playing solitaire.

Research tells us that people who check their phones frequently actually have higher levels of stress during their leisure time, because they “think” they are supposed to be looking for something (on their phone)!

Individuals who have learned to check their phone 3 to 4 times per day (every few hours), are less tense and less stressed overall. Typically, it does not work to “will” ourselves to stop a compulsive behavior. We check our phones for texts and email because we get a reinforcement that feels rewarding. It is rewarding enough that the “checking” becomes compulsive.

What if we checked our phones intentionally, rather than compulsively?

Continued in next column. . .



“Are You Ready” continued here . . .

Instead of willing ourselves to check less often, we remember these devices are tools, and we can use strategically, rather than letting them take our attention and energy.

- **Make it part of your self-care plan**, to *decide when you want to check* your messages, texts and email.
- **If you choose to use social media**, maybe once in the morning **or**, in the evening is enough.
- **Tell your friends and family members** you are establishing a strategic checking schedule. What they have to share is important, and you would rather give it real attention, rather than fragmented attention.
- **Remove the distraction.** Set your device to “sleep mode”. You do not need to be notified immediately when someone or something wants to tell you something that can wait until tomorrow.

Focus on your life, your joy, your *real connections* with yourself and others. Replace checking your phone with something better. Take a deep breath, and pause noting you have time. You can carry a thought to completion rather than feeling pressured by too much information.

Savor the benefits of your efforts. You just may notice:

- You feel more focused and productive
- You do have time for the things that matter to you
- Real connection with people give you longer lasting happiness, and
- You are likely to improve your sleep quality

Quotes on Health & Wellness

“Looking after my health today gives me a better hope for tomorrow.” – Anne Wilson Schaefer

“The secret of health for both mind and body is not to mourn for the past, nor to worry about the future, but to live the present moment wisely and earnestly.” – Buddha



Recipe Corner

corn and black bean burritos

**these burritos are high in flavor and easy to make*

Prep time: 20 minutes

Cook time: 5 minutes



- 1 ¼ C scallions (green onions), rinsed and sliced into ¼-inch wide circles, including green tops
- ¼ C celery, rinsed and finely diced
- 1¼ C frozen yellow corn
- ½ ripe avocado, peeled and diced
- 2 Tbsp fresh cilantro, chopped (or substitute 2 tsp dried coriander)
- 1 can (15½ oz) black beans, drained and rinsed
- ¼ C reduced-fat shredded cheddar cheese
- ¼ C salsa or taco sauce (look for lowest sodium version)
- 12 (9-inch) whole-wheat or spelt tortillas

- 1) Preheat oven to 350 °F.
- 2) Combine scallions, celery, and corn in a small saucepan. Add just enough water to cover.
- 3) Cover, bring to a boil, and reduce heat to medium. Simmer for 5 minutes, until vegetables soften. Drain vegetables. Set aside to cool.
- 4) Combine avocado, cilantro, and beans in a large mixing bowl. Add cheese and salsa, and mix.
- 5) When corn mixture has cooled slightly, add to avocado mixture.
- 6) In a large nonstick pan over medium heat, warm each tortilla for about 15 seconds on each side. Place each tortilla on a flat surface. Spoon 1/3 cup of the mixture into the center of the tortilla. Fold the top and bottom of the tortilla over the filling. Fold in the sides to make a closed packet.
- 7) Repeat with the remaining tortillas.
- 8) When all tortillas are wrapped, continue heating in the oven 5 minutes, until all are warm and cheese is melted.

[https://healthyeating.nhlbi.nih.gov/\(X\(1\)S\(zgscqwftsrhqqh55vsj0u03u\)\)/pdfs/Dinners_Cookbook_508-compliant.pdf](https://healthyeating.nhlbi.nih.gov/(X(1)S(zgscqwftsrhqqh55vsj0u03u))/pdfs/Dinners_Cookbook_508-compliant.pdf)



Chair Yoga

Chair Spinal Twist - Ardha Matsyendrasana

Come to sit sideways on the chair, facing to the left.

Twist your torso toward the left, holding onto the back of the chair, for a spinal twist.

Lengthen your spine on each inhale and twist on each exhale for five breaths.

Move your legs around to the right side of the chair and repeat the twist to the right side.

<https://www.verywell.com/chair-yoga-poses-3567189>



Caregiver/Community Corner

Oregon Care Partners Offering Free Classes for Oregon Caregivers

Are you caring for an aging loved one? Oregon Care Partners provides free trainings on a wide variety of topics to help you with common caregiving challenges like managing anger or other challenging behaviors, managing medications, or caring for someone with Alzheimer's or dementia. In-person classes are held around the state and led by caring professionals who understand the needs of family caregivers. Online classes are also available to take at your convenience. All classes are completely free of charge thanks to funding from the State of Oregon. To register for classes, or to take an online class, visit www.OregonCarePartners.com or call 1-800-930-6851.

Returning Veterans Project in Collaboration with Write Around Portland Offering

Care Givers and Family Members of Veterans, Guard, Reservists, & Service Members Tell your story by joining Write Around Portland and RVP's Military Family Writing Group

Eight Weeks: February—April, 2017

Ages 15 and Up

Dates, times and location: TBD

Registration required.

To sign up, contact Returning Veterans Project at 503-954-2259. Pens, journals, light snacks, childcare, and accommodations provided.

“This list of local resources is provided as a courtesy of VAPORHCS. None of these agencies or providers are affiliated with VAPORHCS and VAPORHCS does not endorse or recommend any agency or provider on this list. Nor does this list constitute a referral by VAPORHCS to any of the listed entities. Use of any of these services or providers is at your own risk.”

Please feel free to submit any community resources related to caregiving for future postings! Thank you!

**Caregiver Support Program
VA Portland Health Care System
503-273-5210**

National Center for PTSD

Introducing Mindfulness Coach App



Practicing mindfulness means grounding yourself in the present moment. Mindfulness has been shown to be helpful for reducing stress and coping with unpleasant thoughts and emotions. Mindfulness Coach will help you practice mindfulness meditation.

Features include:

- Education about the benefits of mindfulness
- Mindfulness exercises to practice on your own or with guidance
- Strategies to help overcome challenges to mindfulness practice
- Log of mindfulness exercises to track your progress
- Reminders to support your mindfulness practice

**Download the mobile app
Free Mindfulness Coach
download from:
[iTunes \(iOS\).](https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/mindfulness-coach/id1088102000)**