



Summer 2016

Caregiver Quarterly Newsletter



VA HEALTH CARE Defining EXCELLENCE in the 21st Century

Summer Self-Care

by Judy Ulibarri, RN



Summer is upon us, and vacation is in the air. Here are a few tips to make vacation time more comfortable.

- **Communicate, communicate, communicate.** For those with limited mobility, chronic illness, or anxiety and depression, travel can bring an added layer of stress.
- **Be realistic.** For those with complex medical needs or highly limited mobility, renting a one-story lakefront cottage in driving distance might be more enjoyable than a whirlwind jaunt overseas or a trip cross-country.
- **Plan ahead.** Familiarize yourself with your destination before you go. Browse web sites to find health services, medical facilities, pharmacies and grocery stores. Keep that information with you while traveling.
- **Attend to medication.** If you or your family member takes medication, make sure you have enough on hand to get through the trip with a buffer in case of delays. Always carry a copy of the prescription.
- **Pack appropriately.** Take along support stockings for extended road trips or flights and pack a back-up of medical supplies. Have snacks and plenty of water ready. Even if your destination offers such provisions, you'll be better able to enjoy yourself if you have them on hand.
- **Plan caretaking shifts.** You might be the primary caregiver at home, but remind your family that this is your vacation, too. Set a schedule so that everyone who's old enough has a few hours to be responsible for caretaking.
- **Pace yourself.** Build in enough extra time for frequent breaks and slow steps. Avoid rushing — this is vacation time!

Go on, get out there. Feel the earth beneath your feet and the wind in your face, smell the flowers in your neighborhood, and listen to the birds chirping. And let nature nurture your mind, body, and soul.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Dementia 101:

In this workshop, you will learn: What dementia is and how it is diagnosed, the different types of dementias, how cognitive losses impact the person with dementia and strategies to adapt to these changes

Sign-up is easy!

Call Kristi Ketchum, LCSW:
(503) 220-8262 ext. 58594

CARD MAKING WORKSHOP for FAMILY CAREGIVERS

Please join us for a 2-hour card-making workshop for Family Caregivers! The goal of this workshop is for Caregivers to connect with one another while enjoying tea and making cards for yourselves! All materials will be provided.

When: Tuesday, August 9th 1-3pm
Where: VA West Linn Clinic, 1750 Blankenship Rd #300, West Linn, OR 97068

How to sign up: please RSVP to Amber Lynch by email amber.lynch@va.gov or by phone 503-220-8262, ext. 57460.

We look forward to seeing each of you at the workshop!



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs



Some Facts

Sexual dysfunction and problems with intimacy are common in both men and women.

Many different factors may lead to sexual dysfunction or problems with intimacy.

These include: mental or emotional factors, hormonal problems, nerve problems, circulation problems or side effects of medicines.

Depression, performance anxiety, and distraction are common mental causes of impotence.

Therapy may include:

Individual therapy and/or couples therapy, new medicine or adjustments in current medicines.



I'm a Caregiver and Intimate Partner of a Seriously Injured Veteran What Do I Need to Know?

(From VA Family Caregivers Guide to Intimacy)

Veterans returning home with major injuries may be anxious about how their spouse or partner will react and how this might change their relationship. The Veteran you are caring for may have physical limitations, medical and/or emotional issues that affect his or her ability to engage in sexual activity. The Veteran may question his or her self-worth, feel depressed and undesirable. This may also contribute to more feelings of emotional separation, making it even harder to resume a healthy intimate relationship. It is important to understand that it may be harder to talk to your Veteran due to changes in his or her behavior or communication style. While talking about the problem can be difficult, it is the first and most important step in recovering intimacy. As the partner and Caregiver for an injured Veteran, you might also experience new difficulties with intimacy. This might include feeling worried that your Veteran partner is no longer emotionally or physically attracted to you because he or she seems emotionally unavailable or shows a decreased interest in physical intimacy and sexual activity.

Caregiving Tips

- Educate yourself. Understanding the Veteran's injury and the related physical and emotional symptoms will help you and the Veteran you care for cope with and manage any changes in intimacy.
- Pay attention to warning signs of depression. If you or your loved one begin displaying signs of depression, take action. If anyone talks about suicide, take it seriously and seek help immediately. Veteran Crisis Line **(1-800-273-TALK [8255])**
- Be open to a new definition of intimacy, including when and how you and your partner are intimate.
- If you decline a request for sexual intimacy from your spouse/partner, try to offer an alternative such as a shared activity or simply cuddling.
- Talk about your feelings, hopes and desires with your partner when you're both calm and ready to listen.
- Find a trusted counselor, support group or friend to discuss your worries and concerns. The change in intimacy can be stressful and confusing. Talking it out can help you find the right perspective for you.
- Don't forget to pay attention to your own needs. It is important for your health and the health of the Veteran that you take some time off from caregiving.
- Find ways to be close that do not involve sex, such as shared activities like cooking, yoga or massage. Spend quality time together. Respect your partner's need for space. Schedule intimate time.

Gentle Yoga for Caregivers & their Veterans

We are pleased to announce the Caregiver Gentle Yoga classes are now available for both Caregiver and Veteran to attend together! You may be thinking that yoga is for the young, lean and bendy, but if this isn't you or your Veteran, don't worry. Our Gentle Caregiver Yoga classes are **very gentle** and designed to accommodate the needs and abilities of each participant, both Caregiver and Veteran.

Research has shown that yoga can, among other things, help:

- ❖ **Reduce stress**
- ❖ **Reduce depression and anxiety**
- ❖ **Improve sleep quality**
- ❖ **Enhance respiratory function**
- ❖ **Lowers blood pressure and blood sugar**
- ❖ **Decrease chronic pain**

CSP Gentle Caregiver Yoga classes take place
When: 2nd and 4th Mondays of each month,
from 9am-10am

Where: VA Portland Health Care System
(Medical Center), Building 101, Room 201

What to wear: comfortable, stretchy clothing
(such as t-shirts and sweat pants)

What to bring: Yourself and your Veteran, and a
yoga mat if you have one. The Caregiver
Support Program supplies mats for people who
do not have them!

If your Veteran would like to join you in the
Gentle Caregiver Yoga classes, please contact
Amber Lynch, 503-220-8262, ext. 57460, prior
to attending so that Amber can obtain the
support of each Veteran's primary care
provider. We look forward to seeing you in our
Gentle Caregiver Yoga classes!



Chair Yoga

Eagle Pose (Garudasana Eagle in Chair)

Cross your right thigh over your left thigh for eagle pose.

If you can, wrap the right foot all the way around the left
calf.

Cross your left arm over the right one at the elbow.

Bend the elbows and bring your palms to touch.

Lift the elbows while dropping the shoulders away from
the ears.

Hold three to five breaths.

Repeat on the other side.

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



*“Stress is not what happens to us. It’s our response
TO what happens. And RESPONSE is something we
can choose.”*

- Maureen Killoran

*“The care you give your loved one depends on the care
you give yourself.”*

- Caregiving daughter



Caregiver Recipe Corner

Family Fruit Salad

Submitted by
Caregiver Christenia Z.



- 1 pint heavy whipping cream
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 1 box any flavored sugar free jello
(This will be the flavor of your fruit salad)
- 3 bananas
- 3 mandarin oranges(peeled/ sectioned)
- 1 large can fruit cocktail (drained)
- 1 large can chunk pineapple (drained)
- Marshmallows (optional)
- Pecans
- 1) mix whipping cream until it is thick and creamy slowly adding sugar,
- 2) mix in jello
- 3) fold in fruits

Fresh summer fruit, such as watermelon and green grapes with watermelon jello is a family favorite!

This Caregiver enjoys making this fruit salad with all members, children and grandparents joining in the fun!



Healing Touch

What?

*HT is non-invasive, utilizes gentle touch to assist in balancing your mind and body.

*Hands are placed on or above the body to help facilitate balance

Why?

Potential Benefits include:

- Reducing stress
- Decreasing pain
- Strengthening the immune system
- Improving recovery from surgery
- Supporting cancer treatment
- Creating a sense of well-being
- Promoting a better night sleep

Where?

Building 104 – Specialty Clinic

When?

Mondays from 12-4

For more info:

Contact Judy Ulibarri, RN at ext. 59604 with questions

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.

The Savvy Caregiver : A Class for Family Caregivers

Do you care for a family member living with Alzheimer's or dementia?

This six-session workshop offers real help to families caring for loved ones with Alzheimer's or another dementia. The workshop was developed by the University of Minnesota and has been found to decrease caregiver stress and increase caregiver confidence.

The program will give family caregivers:

- An understanding of dementia and changes in your loved one
- Tips on how to provide the best care
- Coping skills for the stages of dementia
- Facts about the progression of dementia, and more.
- A hand-book to complement the classes will be provided.

Interested in attending a class at Mt. Hood Adult Day Program in the Fall of 2016? Call: Loriann McNeill, Multnomah County Family Caregiver Support Program Coordinator at (503) 988-8210. On site care: Mt Hood Adult Day Program will provide free on-site care for the person with dementia while the family member is attending the class. Class size is limited-register early!

"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."

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

National Center for PTSD

Introducing PTSD Family Coach

This free mobile app provides extensive information about PTSD, how to take care of yourself, how to take care of your relationship with your loved one or with children, and how to help your loved one get the treatment they deserve.

The app also provides a great deal of information that is specific to Veterans and active duty members of the military.

PTSD Family Coach includes 24 unique tools to help you manage stress including:

- **mindfulness exercises**
- **tools to help you re-build your social networks**
- **tools to help with difficult thoughts and emotions you may be experiencing**

The app also provides a way for you to track your stress level over time, using scientifically valid measures, and can provide specific feedback about your progress.



Save the Date!

Welcome Home Veterans!

The VA Portland Health Care System honors and shows its appreciation for service members by hosting a *Welcome Home* celebration for Veterans and their families in the Pacific Northwest!

Sunday, Sept. 18, 2016

Enjoy free, all day admission
at the
Oregon Zoo

4001 SW Canyon Road
Portland, Oregon

Registration
9 a.m. - 12 noon



Image used with permission, courtesy of Oregon Zoo

Parking is limited and at own expense, please consider taking TriMet MAX: Red or Blue Line trains stop next to the Oregon Zoo at the Washington Park Station

- ☆ Free admission and food for Veterans and their guests!
- ☆ *RSVP by Monday, September 12, 2016*
Space is limited and RSVP is required
- ☆ RSVP Contact: Welcomehome@va.gov;
503-273-5075 or outside Portland,
1-800-949-1004, ext. 53062
- ☆ Come with your family and enjoy
food, fun and learn about VA benefits
and services



VA
HEALTH
CARE

Defining
EXCELLENCE
in the 21st Century