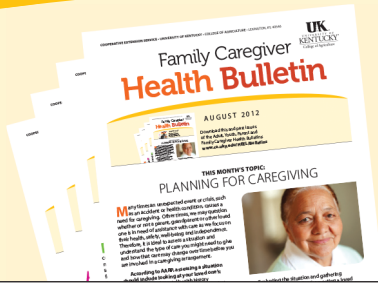


Family Caregiver Health Bulletin



JANUARY 2014

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THIS MONTH'S TOPIC:

NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS FOR CAREGIVERS

With overwhelming stress and responsibility, some caregivers may find it difficult or simply feel unmotivated to make a New Year's resolution. But resolutions at the New Year are important because they allow you to reflect on past behavior and work toward setting and achieving goals that influence positive lifestyle changes and healthy decisions. Because unhealthy behaviors develop over time, it can take time to learn healthy choices and adapt healthy behavior. The American Psychological Association recommends setting small, manageable and achievable goals throughout the year. Realistic goals allow for a better chance at success.

Too many caregivers find out the hard way that one must take care of themselves in order to take care of others. These caregivers often push and stress themselves without asking for help or talking about it. They feel guilty if they put their own needs first. According to the Pocket Guide for the Alzheimer's Caregiver, some healthy resolutions that caregivers may want to consider include:

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Caregiving is not a journey to take alone. Talk to people, seek advice, and consult with professional counselors.

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- **Rest.** Take time each day away from the stress.
- **Ask for help.** Be confident that your friends and family want to help and don't be ashamed or feel guilty to ask.
- **Be healthy.** Getting exercise, making healthy food choices, refraining from smoking and heavy drinking and regular visits to the doctor are important for both the caregiver's physical and mental well-being.
- **Don't ignore spiritual health.** Feed your inner self with meditation, prayer, silence, reading or some other activity that fulfills you.
- **Embrace emotional health.** Caregiving is not a journey to take alone. Talk to people, seek advice, and consult with professional counselors. It is also important to enjoy hobbies or explore new ones.
- **Educate yourself.** Learn about the disease or disability that is affecting your loved one. Seek out services and follow recommendations.
- **Find humor.** Laughter is the best medicine. Don't feel guilty when you laugh. Try to laugh with your loved one as you are a caregiving team.
- **See past the disease.** Your loved one is not the disease. See the care recipient as a person and validate him by looking into his heart and soul and by remembering his life story. It is expected to grieve the disease and feel sad, but continue to honor the person and continue to have a relationship with him.
- **Pat yourself on the back.** Value yourself for the tremendous gift of caring that you are

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providing. Recognize that you are not perfect but that you can give your best.

- **Hold hands.** Embrace your loved one and the other caregivers who walk in your shoes.

Happy New Year and best wishes to all caregivers. Thank you for what you do.

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SOURCE:

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