

Caregiver's Corner Column (August 2013)

Healthy Living Strategies

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Family caregivers often fail to take good care of themselves. Often they allow their own health to deteriorate while focusing on the needs of those they care for. Yet, it is imperative that caregivers maintain their own health and well-being in order to successfully continue in their caregiver role. To this end, the focus of this article is on Healthy Living Strategies.

In today's world, achieving your wellness goals may be attainable through Healthy Living Strategies. To help with your success, set realistic goals supported by your doctor's input. This takes proper planning, time, effort, and patience. However, it can also be a very enjoyable process! If a family member, friend, or neighbor would like to reach their wellness goals using these strategies, together you can support one another and appreciate the journey. There are many benefits in utilizing Healthy Living Strategies as "a way of life" once your goals have been met. Some of these benefits include increased mobility, strength, flexibility, and balance during activities of daily living. These strategies are timeless and may enhance the wellness of adults of all ages. Getting started is easy once you make the commitment...

What are some of these Healthy Living Strategies?

Tai Chi

According to Leigh F. Callahan, Associate Professor at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Medicine, tai chi, "reduces pain, stiffness, and fatigue, and improves (arthritis patients) balance."

Yoga and Stretching

Dr. Karen J. Sherman of the Group Health Research Institute in Seattle found in an extensive clinical trial that, "both yoga and stretching can be good, safe options for people who are willing to try physical activity to relieve their moderate low back pain" especially when "taught by instructors who can tailor the difficulty to accommodate participants' physical limitations."

Dancing

The National Institute of Health (NIH) has a Go4Life Campaign which includes the Greenspring Stars, who enjoy dancing the twist, tango, waltz, cha cha, merengue, and more. They also provide a free workout booklet entitled, "Workout to Go" with 13 easy-to-follow strength, balance, and flexibility exercises found at their website <http://go4life.nia.gov/print/2005>.

Water-Based Exercise and More

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) shares that "Water-Based Exercise (swimming, water aerobics) can benefit older adults by improving the quality of life and decreasing disability. It also improves or maintains the bone health of post-menopausal women." Moreover, you can "strengthen your muscles through lifting weights, resistance bands, heavy gardening, and yoga."

Along with these evidence-based Healthy Living Strategies, a few more to consider are:

- Reduce Stress
- Stay Hydrated

- Play Brain Games (word search, crosswords)
- Eliminate Fall Hazards in Your Home
- Have your Eyes and Hearing Checked Regularly
- Wear Proper Footwear
- Maintain a Balanced Diet
- Get Plenty of Rest
- Engage in Positive Social Interaction
- Do the things that make you happy! (reading, crafts, long walks, painting, singing, travel, gardening)

Another Healthy Living Strategy is to know the resources available to you in your community. You may find these resources are helpful to you now or in the future. The Caregiver Resource Network (CRN) makes it easy for you. The CRN website at www.caregiverresource.net has a link at the bottom of its homepage to a variety of Health Education program options available in Kent County through the Kent County Senior Millage. The CRN is a community-wide collaboration consisting of 117 local businesses which exist to be a resource for family caregivers.

Caregiver's Corner is provided as a public service of the **Caregiver Resource Network**. The Caregiver Resource Network is a collaboration of West Michigan organizations dedicated to providing for the needs and welfare of family and professional caregivers within the community. Funded by the Area Agency on Aging of Western Michigan with Older American's Act Title IIIIE, Family Caregiver Support funds. For more information consult our website at www.CaregiverResource.net or call toll free at 1-888-456-5664.