



Caregivers Support Series Lunch and Learn

Thanks to the generous support of and a grant from the Southwest Connecticut Agency on Aging we are pleased to offer a four-part Series for Caregivers.

Caregiving often creeps up on you. You start by sitting by your husband's side at the hospital, learning about what he needs upon discharge. Maybe you found yourself dropping by your mom's house and doing her laundry, or taking your dad to a doctor's appointment. You find yourself doing the grocery shopping and refilling prescriptions. Gradually, you are doing more and more. At some point, you realize you have made a commitment to take care of someone else.

Sometimes, caregiving is triggered by a major health event, such as a stroke, heart attack, or accident. Maybe you suddenly realize that your spouse's memory lapses have become dangerous. Life as you know it stops, and all your energy goes to caring for your loved one. Caregiving has become your new career, and you adjust to a new normal.

Caregivers can be spouses, partners, adult children, parents, other relatives (siblings, aunts, nieces/nephews, in-laws, grandchildren), friends, neighbors. Whatever your relationship with the person you're caring for, it's important that you add the title *caregiver* to the list of things you are.

Without identifying yourself as a caregiver, you won't know to search for resources that can help you navigate this new role. Adding caregiving to that list can easily lead to frustration and exhaustion. You might need to navigate social service systems, call doctors while you're at work, advocate for the care receiver, and take care of their day-to-day needs, while you try to do all of those same things for yourself and your family.

You are rarely trained to do the broad range of tasks you are asked to do as a caregiver. As a result, you may end up, for example, with back strain because you haven't had the benefit of training from a physical therapist on how to correctly transfer someone from bed to chair, or wheelchair to car. Or you find yourself battling with your mother who has Alzheimer's because you have not learned the skills necessary to communicate with someone with a cognitive impairment.

Part I - March 5

Adult Day Care: Is it Right for your Loved one?

Presented by David Magner of Jewish Senior Services

Seniors who prefer to live at home overlook one big possible downside — the potential for a lack of meaningful social interaction. Caregivers can't always provide everything that a senior or disabled adult living at home needs to lead a happy, fulfilling life. Though you may feel guilty at first about considering adult day care for your senior, day centers can provide your loved one with many benefits, from increased social interaction to cognitive stimulation. Another major benefit of adult day care is potentially delaying the move to a long-term care facility.

Caregiver Peace of Mind. From the standpoint of caregivers, the biggest benefit of adult day care is a break from the stress of balancing caring for your loved one with work or other family obligations. The benefits of adult day care are numerous. For seniors, it's a chance to live at home longer and make new friends. And for caregivers, it provides peace of mind that your loved one is in good hands while you can't be there.

Part II- April 2

Where to Get the Help You Need

Presented by Kathleen Regan of SWCAA

Respite care provides a break, or a time of caregiver relief, from the constant physical and emotional stress of caring for a person with a chronic illness. The task of caring for a person with a chronic illness can be overwhelming. An occasional break allows an exhausted caregiver to regroup, both physically and emotionally, and to find the strength to carry on.

The Connecticut Statewide Respite Care Program and The National Family Caregiver Support Program are both respite programs designed to help caregivers. These programs are offered throughout the state of CT, in South Western CT they are administered by Southwestern CT Agency on Aging. The programs offer caregivers the opportunity to receive an assessment of services needed and have a care plan developed that includes the provision of services for the individual they are caring for. Eligible caregivers may apply for daytime or overnight respite care services that may include: Adult day care, home health aide, homemaker, companion, personal care assistants, skilled nursing care or short term nursing care.

Part III - May 7

Caregiver Training: What you Need to Know

Presented by Katie Vanovitch of Senior Helpers

Learn to recognize the need for dignity while fine-tuning your skills to help your loved one. It is extremely difficult to depend on another person to perform basic tasks. It can also be difficult for the new caregiver to undertake these tasks for a loved one. When a friend or family member becomes disabled, the inclination of the caregiver is to over-care. Activities of daily living (ADLs) are the everyday activities involved in personal care such as feeding, dressing, bathing, moving from a bed to a chair (also called transferring), toileting and walking. Physical or mental disabilities can restrict a person's ability to perform personal ADLs. It is extremely difficult to depend on another person to perform these basic tasks. It can also be difficult for the new caregiver to undertake these tasks for a loved one. When a friend or family member becomes disabled, the inclination of the caregiver is to over-care. Learn to Recognize the need for dignity while fine-tuning your skills to help your loved one.

Part IV - June 4

First, Care for Yourself

Presented by Reiki Master and Meditation teacher Lauren Lanham

On an airplane, an oxygen mask descends in front of you. What do you do? As we all know, the first rule is to put on your own oxygen mask before you assist anyone else. Only when we first tend to our own needs can we effectively help others. Self care is the foundation of service work. Caring for yourself is one of the most important—and one of the most often forgotten—things you can do as a caregiver. When your needs are taken care of, the person you care for will benefit, too.

Caregiving has many challenges and also many rewards. To sustain the demands of caring for others, a strong self-care practice must be established. Join Lauren as she

guides an exploration into the importance of self-care and what a self-care practice might look like for you, as it is different for each individual.

Lauren Lanham has been a yoga and meditation teacher for more than 20 years. She holds certifications from The White Lotus Foundation and Amrit Yoga Foundation. Lauren is a Reiki Master. She has also complete facilitator trainings in the *Creating Lasting Family Connections Program* and in the *QPR – Suicide Prevention Program*. Lauren currently runs a non-profit that offers family communications workshops, meditation classes and journaling workshops to a wide variety of Fairfield County groups.

Part V - June 25

Managing Difficult Conversations about Care

Presented by Maplewood at Southport

You've confirmed your role as caregiver. You've assessed your loved one's needs and weighed your concerns — and determined it's time to talk. But how do you bring up the conversation without conveying a desire for control? How do you express your concern without condescending? When it comes to broaching thorny topics like how will we afford long term care, or emotionally charged ones like what happens when you can't drive any more, how do you have a measured, thoughtful discussion?

There may be nagging feelings of guilt on your part — a feeling that you've failed because you are considering support or a transition. Your parent may also feel guilty about becoming a burden.

Because these are difficult conversations that often happen in tense circumstances and settings, it's critical not to rush them, and to have as many of these discussions as possible before a health or life emergency.