



A Healthy Outlook!

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Long-Distance Caregiving

In today's world, it's common for family members to live in different cities and states. Many adult children must help from a distance when their older parents and other relatives need assistance. The task can be difficult, stressful, and time consuming. Can you deal with the problem over the phone or do you need to be there in person? That's often one of the most difficult aspects of long-distance caregiving. Clear emergencies obviously require a trip. However, other situations can be difficult to judge over the phone. There's no magic answer, but there are a number of steps you can take to make the task more manageable.

■ **Gather information.** Determine with

your parents (and other family members) what help they need. Look for community services that help. You



can get information over the phone and the Internet. The Eldercare Locator (800-677-1116) can tell you which local agencies provide services and will refer you to the area agency on aging in your parents' community.

■ **Be prepared.** Before a crisis occurs, work with your parents to collect the necessary medical, financial, and legal information. Know their doctors, medications, insurance information, assets, and social security numbers. Perhaps you can keep a copy of their local phone book on hand, just in case.

■ **Make a list.** Identify family, friends, clergy, and others who might help. On your next visit, introduce yourself to

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Top Ten Tips for Holiday Saving

(From the Consumer Credit Counseling Service of Greater Washington, Inc.)

1. Make a list and check it twice. Stick to a shopping list. This keeps you away from impulsive, last-minute purchases.

2. Shop early. Last-minute, desperation shopping is one of the main reasons consumers overspend

3. Look for bargains. Start with the sale ads in your local newspaper. Visit stores that are not doing well—they often have the best bargains.

4. Shop at outlets and discount clubs. Specialty stores may be less crowded, but outlets and discount stores offer better bargains.

5. Pay cash. Decide before you leave home how much you plan to spend

that day. Take only enough cash to cover those purchases.

6. Draw names. If you have a big family or group of close friends, pick names out of a hat so you only have one gift to buy.

7. Use caution when shopping via catalog/online. Sale prices are harder to come by in catalogs. Retailers know that consumers will pay more for the convenience of buying via these methods. Watch for high shipping and handling fees.

8. Be creative. Homemade gifts, food, and craft items are always a welcome

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neighbors and friends and keep their phone numbers and addresses. If you can't reach your parent, calling these people can ease your mind. Also, they may be able to help with some needed tasks.

■ **Assess the situation.** When you visit your parents, look for health or safety problems. Professional consultants are available to help older people and family members decide when an older adult needs assistance. Involve your parents in assessing their needs.

■ **Be sensitive to your parents' views.** Even though dealing with these issues can be frustrating, it's important to maintain a positive focus. Explain that the services will help them remain independent. Explain how the services work. Sometimes it's helpful to have someone your parents respect recommend the service.

■ **Take care of your own needs.** Learn and use coping skills, get support or counseling, and take time for yourself.

■ **Accept that it's impossible to be everything to everyone.** Ask for help when you need it. Most importantly, give yourself credit for doing the best you can.

A variety of related resources can be found at the **American Association for Retired Persons** Web site (<http://www.aarp.org/>) including the following:

Understanding Medicare and Health Insurance

—explains Medicare and other health insurance options.

A Guide to Nursing Home Performance

—It's helpful to know how nursing homes fared during their recent inspections. Here's a state-by-state guide.

Taking Care of Yourself

—When caring for others, it's important to also care for yourself. Follow these tips for relieving stress.

Additional Resources:

Eldercare Locator

(<http://www.eldercare.gov/Eldercare/Public/Home.asp>)—A nationwide toll-free or online service to help older adults and their caregivers find local services.

How to Choose a Home Care Provider

(<http://www.nahc.org/Consumer/contents.html>)—Information from the National Association for Home Care on types of home care, who pays, and how to find local services.

Long Distance Caregiving

(http://hr.ucsb.edu/Worklife/Elder_Care/elder_care_longdistance.htm) Tips from the University of California at Santa Barbara, Human Resources Department. ■

Suicide Prevention for Families: What To Do and Not To Do

While the holiday season is both a happy and somewhat stressful time for most, there are some people who are particularly at risk during this time. The prevailing notion that one "should" be happy during the holidays can exacerbate the negative feelings of those not doing very well. In particular, people suffering from depression and addictive disorders can really struggle. If you know someone who is feeling so badly that they have become suicidal, consider the following:

- Don't be afraid to ask about suicide
- Don't brush off or ignore comments about suicide or statements like, "I wish I was dead."
- Encourage the person affected to talk about it.
- Avoid superficial reassurance ("You have so much to live for" or "Things can't be that bad").
- Avoid giving advice prematurely, and don't try to argue them out of it. It discourages conversation.

- Offer hope. Let them know that you care and understand, that they are not alone, and that you believe the suicidal urge will pass.
- In an emergency, stay with them, get rid of guns and drugs, and call the Montgomery County hotline: 301-738-CALL; Montgomery County Crisis Center: 240-777-4000; or take them to a hospital if necessary.
- Get information (and possibly professional help) for yourself. ■

Not sure what to do?

You also can consult with the EAP to help think through how to handle this very difficult situation. If you would like information on this topic, be sure to check the following Web sites:

American Association of Suicidology: www.suicidology.org

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention: www.afsp.org

National Hopeline Network: (800-SUICIDE) www.hopeline.com



Top Ten Savings continued from page 1

treat. Making such gifts can be fun for the whole family, and it's more in keeping with traditional holiday customs around the world.

9. Develop traditions. Many families have created traditions, such as lighting candles and reading to each other instead of buying gifts. Instead of exchanging gifts, donate to shelter residents, hospital patients, or those neighbors who are less fortunate.

10. Remember the true meaning of the season. Whether you celebrate Christmas, Chanukah, Kwanza, or the Winter Solstice, remember that this is a special time to share yourself with family/friends. It is a season of spiritual refreshment and revitalization, not a time for plunging into debt.

Bonus tips: Credit counselors say you are heading for trouble if you are charging purchases to credit cards that already carry unpaid balances; you need special charge accounts to cover purchases you can't cover with cash; or you are shelling out 20 percent or more of your take-home income for charge card debts and loans. ■

"Even if you're on the right track, you'll get run over if you just sit there."

—Will Rogers

Parties and the Social Scene

Parties or "get togethers" are a major part of the high school social scene. They can be an enjoyable way for kids to meet and socialize. However, without proper planning and careful supervision, parties can be a disaster waiting to happen. The following guidelines will help you keep parties both more fun and safe.

When the party is at your house—

Before the party:

- Set the ground rules. Your son or daughter needs to know what to expect.
- Limit party attendance. Curb the "open party" situation.
- Designate the "off-limits" rooms in your house.
- Know your legal responsibilities and share them with your child.
- Set a time for the party to end.
- Remove any family liquor from areas accessible to party guests.
- Invite other couples to help chaperone.

At the party:

- Be present and visible. Don't be pressured into staying out of sight.
- No smoking, no alcohol, no drugs.
- No leaving the party and then returning.
- Open cans or containers cannot be brought into the party.

- Never allow anyone you suspect is under the influence of alcohol or other drugs to drive.
- Call their parents, a cab, or ask a sober adult to drive them home.
- Don't hesitate to call police if unwanted guests refuse to leave.

When the party is elsewhere:

- Call the host parent to be sure that a parent will be present and get assurance that alcohol or drugs will not be permitted.
- Know how your child will get to and from the party.
- Discuss the possible situations your adolescent might encounter and how to handle them. Provide them with your contact information should they want to leave early.
- Establish clear, firm rules against driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol or riding with someone who has been drinking or using drugs.
- Be awake for your child's return or have him or her awaken you. This gives you the opportunity to assess whether or not your child has been using drugs or alcohol. ■

Adopted from A Parent's Guide for the Prevention of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Use, Suburban Hospital Healthcare System

Lowering Holiday Stress

According to an MSNBC/Prevention Magazine survey, 41 percent of those polled owned up to finding Christmas and Chanukah stressful, rating it right up there with asking the boss for a raise. With that in mind, here are a few suggestions to make your holiday more enjoyable:

- Be flexible. Allow for the unexpected and be reasonable about expectations.
- Try to avoid major family/work confrontations during the holiday season. It is a time of year when emo-

tions are heightened and most of us are more on edge than usual.

- Acknowledge that feelings of sadness, unhappiness, depression, or melancholy are normal and may be exacerbated during a holiday season.
- Decide ahead of time how you want to react at holiday events to people who disturb you and then try to react to them in this manner.
- For buying gifts, beware of going into credit card debt. If you cannot afford to buy the gift now with cash or check,

perhaps you should not buy it.

- Examine your holiday "shoulds." Are there any you could discard?
- Try to maintain your boundaries with family/friends who are expecting a lot from you during the holidays.
- Let yourself have fun.
- Thank yourself for the good you have accomplished this past year. Acknowledge your positive attributes.
- Enjoy the journey, not just the destination. ■

Ask the EAP

Q.

I have a family member who seems to have a serious problem, but won't seek help. This is bothering me a lot, and I can't figure out what to do. Is there anything the EAP can do to help me?

A.

There are a few things that we can do that you might find useful. First, we could help you think through your options and the implication of each option. Options can range from exploring if intervening could be done to figuring out what to do for yourself and your family member if intervening is not possible. We could provide you with a list of possible resources should this person become open to help at a later date. Some people find it useful to be able to talk about such difficult, private situations with an impartial person. Overall, getting assistance with a family problem is one of the most common reasons that employees contact us,

Holiday Colors!

The fall harvest is nature's way of providing us with a bounty of richly colored, highly nutritious fruits and vegetables. Researchers have found that the various colors of fruits and vegetables provide a wide range of antioxidants and phytochemicals that are thought to lower the risk of heart disease, diabetes, and some forms of cancer.

So, as you are planning your holiday menu or simply find yourself in front of the holiday buffet this year, remember to mix up your colors in the form of fruits and vegetable! Here are some suggestions to help you do just that!

Green: salads, green beans, broccoli, green peppers, asparagus
Red: red peppers, tomatoes, cranberries, strawberries
Orange: carrots, sweet potatoes, pumpkins, oranges
Purple/Blue: berries, grapes, beets
Yellow: corn, squash, pineapples
White: cauliflower, onions, parsnips
Mix it up this holiday season, add some color to the table or on your plate and always remember to strive for 5 A Day!

Submitted by Madeleine Said, Dietetic Student, Montgomery College, per Susan E. Ghelman, R.D., L.D., Food Service Supervisor, Division of Food and Nutrition Services, 301-670-8295 ■

and we would encourage you to give us a call.

Do you have a question for the EAP? Send your questions via FirstClass, Outlook, or the Pony to Jeff Becker. ■



Upcoming Events

December

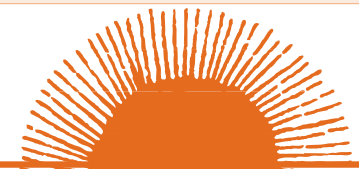
National Drunk and Drugged Driving (3D) Prevention Month
National Commission Against Drunk Driving
8403 Colesville Road, Suite 370; Silver Spring, MD 20910
phone 240-247-6004 • e-mail ncadd@ncadd.com
Web site www.3dmonth.org

January

Glaucoma Awareness Month
Prevent Blindness America
500 East Remington Road, Schaumburg, IL 60173-5611
phone 800-331-2020 • Web site www.preventblindness.org

February

American Heart Month
American Heart Association
7272 Greenville Avenue, Dallas, TX 75231
phone 800-242-8721 • Web site www.americanheart.org



A Healthy Outlook!

To help employees with troubling issues before they become overwhelming.



EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE

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Important Notice: Information in *A Healthy Outlook!* is for general information purposes only and is not intended to replace the counsel or advice of a qualified health professional.

For further questions or help with specific problems or personal concerns contact your employee assistance professional.

You may contact us or send your questions and comments to Debra_Tipton@fc.mcps.k12.md.us.

Please note that e-mail is not necessarily confidential.