

Caregivers Connection

July 22 Issue

Contact: Rita Burfeind

262 377-7869

rburg@wi.rr.com

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Hit the PAUSE Button

A caregiver to her son: I'm so angry this is happening to your dad and me [dementia] and unfortunately I'm taking it out on your dad.

A caregiver about her physically disabled husband: He gets frustrated because he can't do things—and then he takes it out on me.

Both scenarios—the caregiver's angle and the care recipient's perspective—point out how frustration can lead to justified or unjustified anger responses. Myriad emotions run rampant in the lives of those who need care and those who give it. The end result often isn't a calm, cool, and collected environment .

Whether it's frustration over physical limitations or a behavior manifested by dementia, the anger a loved one displays bleeds into the life of his or her caregiver. One person's anger often generates an angry response from another.

If someone with dementia is exhibiting aggressive or violent conduct, it is time to consult a health care professional. Perhaps there is some underlying physical condition. Perhaps pharmaceuticals can help manage the behavior.

In the meantime, whether the loved one is frustrated over physical limitations or has dementia, it is helpful for the caregiver to remember not to take the angry outbursts personally. Anger is often the result of loss of control. Phrases such as "You can't," "You need to," "I told you," "I want you to," can make a tough situation worse. Allowing the

care recipient to have some control over his or her life may decrease angry episodes. Being aware of early signs of frustration can help the caregiver distract or redirect the person before hostile behavior manifests itself.

The most dedicated, loving caregiver will lose patience and become angry at times. Too many responsibilities; difficult, unpleasant tasks; feeling unappreciated; getting little help or support from others; and feeling “there is no light at the end of the tunnel” lead to the natural, legitimate reaction of anger.

While anger can cause problems and pain, it can also create energy to find new and constructive ways to handle a situation. Finding healthy ways to deal with anger such as going for a walk, talking with a friend or professional, changing those things that can be changed, and learning to accept those that can’t are ways to manage this powerful and scary emotion.

By reducing his or her own stress, a caregiver may find it easier to cope when a loved one “acts out.” Venting anger to someone whom the caregiver can trust, and who has a sympathetic ear, can lessen the tension created by aggravation. Reaching out to others who may have similar experiences may be another option. Attending informational events regarding the situation may be useful.

For information regarding resources of varying kinds in Ozaukee County, visit www.ozccc.org, the Ozaukee County Caregivers Coalition website. Professionals at the Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) in Port Washington are available to counsel, to advise, and to provide practical resources (262 238-8120 or 262 284-8120). Caregivers Coffees provide an outlet for sharing bothersome issues.

Events in August include the following educational sessions (The Journey Series):

Tuesday, August 5—2:30-4:30 p.m.—“Medication Checkup/Partnering with Your Doctor” and **Tuesday, August 26**—2:30-4:30 p.m.—“Safety for Caregivers—Hands-on-Care and Home Safety Considerations.” These meetings will be at the Family Enrichment Center, 885 Badger Circle, Grafton. To register, call the ADRC number above.

Caregiver Coffees next month will be held on:

August 5, 2014 (first Tuesday of each month) 6:00-7:30 p.m., at The Providence Place, 815 Washington Avenue (Hwy. 60), Grafton;

August 12, 2014 (second Tuesday of each month) 10-11:30 a.m., the County Administration Building, room #117, 121 W. Main St., Port Washington. Contact Julie Irvine at 414 333-1168 or jirvine@marykay.com for information;

August 27, 2014 (fourth Wednesday of each month), 10:00-11:30 at Lakefield Adult Day Center (St. John's Lutheran Church), corner of Lakefield and Port Washington Rds., Grafton.

Lakefield Adult Day Center provides care for loved ones while the caregivers attend the coffee there. For more information about any of the Caregiver Coffees, contact Barbara Lindholm at (262) 376-4328 or blindywb2@sbcglobal.net or Julie Irvine.

--Rita Burfeind