

Featured Article

Advocating for a Family Member

Dependent on the health and ability of the person you care for, it is likely that at some point in your role as a family caregiver, you will advocate for that person. You may need to be present at appointments to ask questions, research and access services, resolve problem situations and ensure all care needs are respected and met.

The following are some tips to help you be an effective advocate:

Communicate with the care recipient: As much as possible keep them involved in decisions that regard their care. Focus on their wishes as you work to advocate on their behalf.

Develop an action plan: Set realistic goals and take one step at a time toward reaching them. When tasks seem overwhelming, having a plan laying out each step makes everything seem more manageable. The worst time to figure out what is available and how to access it is during a crisis.

Prepare questions in advance: Health care professionals often have limited time to spend with you. Write down your questions in advance so you don't forget them if you become stressed or upset. Rehearse what you want to say. Decide what information is most important and ask those questions first. Be concise and specific about the information you need.

Keep a written record: Write down answers you receive to questions. You may need to refer to this information in the future. Also, keep a log of contacts, phone numbers, names, dates and information acquired all in one place, so you can easily retrieve them when needed. In addition, keep a written record of any pertinent details related to your family member's health condition and behaviour.

Remain calm: Believe that the information you seek and what you have to say is important and that you and your family member have a right to the answers. Anger or emotional shutdown will only get in the way of the communication.

Communicate clearly and directly: Prepare in advance for any meetings so you can be clear and concise. Ask for what you want and express your feelings. Avoid rambling and don't expect the other person to guess what it is you are trying to say.

Be persistent and follow-up: Finding the answers you need may take time, effort and several telephone calls or emails. Don't give up. Persistence produces results. Keep in mind that even though you are focused only on your family member, the healthcare professionals have many patients.

Find the right person: Determine who the key contact is so you don't waste time struggling to find answers where they are not available.

Find an appropriate time: Good timing is essential and can make the difference between managing the problem and making it worse. Wait until you are less anxious, angry or upset before trying to deal with a situation. Arrange to meet and talk at a time when both parties can focus on problem solving.

By Family Caregiver Network Society
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Why Does Grandpa Tell the Same Stories Over and Over?

Q - My children notice that Grandpa often tells the same stories over and over again. Why is that and what should I tell my children?

A - What Grandpa is really doing is "reminiscing". Reminiscence is a very important mental exercise in advanced age. It is one of the 'memory functions' with which we 're-affirm' the value and meaning of our lives. Stored in our heads are a collection of videotapes or DVD's containing the memories that are important to us. The topics are diverse. They could be related to everything and anything - - - from childhood activities, growing up, school, work, play, life transitions (marriage, etc.) to 'you-name-it'. As the end of life draws nearer, 'elders' need to feel that their lives were meaningful, worthwhile - - that it was important that they "passed this way" - - that they made a contribution. This is the "search for meaning". Elders have an unspoken dread of arriving at the end of their time only to face the question immortalized in Peggy Lee's song, "IS THAT ALL THERE IS?"

And so, the key thing about reminiscence is that this process is BENEFICIAL to the mental health and hygiene of elders. Psychologists call it "a sense-making process", reminiscers are 'making sense of their lives'. These repeated 'stories' from the distant past often provide feelings of contentment and peace-of-mind. ("Yes, maybe it DID matter that I lived in this world!"). Maybe we should be encouraging our kids to LISTEN TO Grandpa's oft-repeated stories with patience, tolerance, courtesy and understanding. Who knows - - the kids might even LEARN something!

This section of our newsletter gives you an opportunity to send in questions and receive answers from one of Canada's leading and founding gerontologists! Following his retirement as a professor of gerontology at Simon Fraser University, Dr. John Crawford continues to share his expertise and wisdom by serving as the VP of Education for the Canadian Academy of Senior Advisors. Take advantage of your access to this remarkable resource by e-mailing your questions to: drjohn@canadacsa.com

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Heart Healthy Recipe

Hot Mulled Tea

This tea is perfect on a cold winter night. A great alternative to mulled wine or hot chocolate.

Ingredients (Serves 4)

- 2 tea bags (black tea, rooibos, green tea or decaffeinated herbal berry tea)
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 5 whole cloves
- 1 whole star anise
- ½ vanilla pod (optional)
- 4 cups (1 L) boiling water, plus more for warming the tea pot.

Directions

- 1. Place a small amount of boiling water in the tea pot to warm it up. Discard.**
- 2. Add tea bags, cinnamon, cloves and star anise to the tea pot and add the 4 cups (1 L) of boiling water.**
- 3. Let steep for 3 to 5 minutes and remove the teabags. Let steep for 2 minutes longer and serve immediately.**

Nutritional information per serving (1 cup / 250 mL)

Calories: 2 , Protein: 0 g, Total fat: 0 g, Saturated fat: 0 g, Dietary cholesterol: 0 mg, Carbohydrate: 1 g, Dietary fibre: 0 g, Sodium: 7 mg, Potassium: 88 mg

Developed by Nadine Day, RD. ©The Heart and Stroke Foundation

Joke or Quote of The Month

Free Drinks

A flight attendant on a cross-country flight nervously announced, about 30 minutes outbound from LA, "I don't know how this happened, but we have 103 passengers aboard and only 40 dinners."

When the passengers' muttering had died down, she continued, "Anyone who is kind enough to give up his meal so someone else can eat will receive free drinks for the length of the flight."

Her next announcement came an hour later. "If anyone wants to change his mind, we still have 29 dinners available!"

www.mycleanhumor.com

Quotes of the Month

How do you define success? "He who has achieved success has worked well, laughed often and loved much." *Elbert Hubbard*

"Too often, people focus only on results. But getting results without learning something or without having fun are incomplete. So is having fun without getting the results, or having fun without learning something new to help and empower you in the future. Accomplishment is all three: the result, personal growth and having fun." *Peter L. Hirsch*

"Few will have the greatness to bend history itself; but each of us can work to change a small portion of events, and in the total; of all those acts will be written the history of this generation." *Robert F. Kennedy*

"Footprints on the sands of time are not made by sitting down." *Author Unknown*

Did You Know?

Volunteer Work

According to the latest data from the Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating (2004), almost 12 million Canadians, or 45% of the population aged 15 and older, volunteered during the 12 month period preceding the survey.

Source : A Portrait of Seniors in Canada 2006, Statistics Canada

Seniors Tip

Security Tips While Travelling

Every year we are told what to do with our homes when we leave on vacation (get timers for lights, have some trusted person to remove flyers and mail from mailbox, and so on). This year here are some tips to follow while you are actually on vacation.

At the hotel...

- Unpack and arrange your belongings so you can tell if anything is missing.
- Lock your suitcase so it can't be used to carry your property out.
- Always take your cash, credit cards and keys with you when you leave the room.
- Do not open your door to strangers.
- Do not leave jewelry, cameras or other valuables lying around your room. Use

your hotel's safe to store your valuables and extra cash.

- **Always use the hotel's auxiliary locks on doors and windows. In fact consider buying and using portable locks and alarms.**
- **When leaving, if the maid has cleaned your room, hang the Do Not Disturb sign on the door.**
- **When you go out leave a light and radio on.**
- **Take your room key with you. Don't leave it at the front desk.**
- **Be aware of your surroundings.**
- **Notify the manager of any suspicious persons in the area.**
- **Do not give out your room number to strangers.**
- **Report any missing items to the hotel management and police.**

By Cst. Alan Towey

www.seniorsgotravel.com

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Jennifer Legge, Newsletter editor, Canadian Academy of Senior Advisors.

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