



Grandparents Corner

May 2014

“Taking Care of You”

It is common for caregivers to overlook their own needs when caring for others. If you have ever flown in a plane, think back to a time when you were preparing for takeoff and the flight attendant gave you instructions for using the oxygen masks. If you were flying with a small child or dependent person, who did they instruct you to place the mask on first?

The flight attendant always tells us to place the mask on ourselves first. This is because if we pass out, we cannot place the mask on the person who is depending on us. It is the same way when we are caring for dependent family members. Caregivers need to take care of themselves first so that they can be better able to care for those who need them. It is not being self-centered when you take time for your own needs.

Neglecting your own physical and emotional needs can lead to stress or burnout. Taking time to care for yourself will give you the energy and health to continue caring for your family.

Some ways to take better care of you include the following:

- Practice physical self-care
- Maintain social contacts
- Make time for relaxation or enjoyment

Physical self-care includes a healthy diet, exercise, rest and relaxation. Just a few minutes each day can improve how you feel and you will be setting a good example for the children in your care. Make an effort to maintain friendships and activities that are important to you. Friends can provide comfort and support, and they can be good listeners in difficult times.

You may feel you don't have time to do things for yourself or for leisure; however, learning to manage time can lead to increased satisfaction with more free time and reduced stress. This may require changing old habits and using self-discipline. You might find it helpful to keep track of your activities for a week and look over the list to see how your time was spent. Then, prioritize activities, eliminating some that are not as important in order to make time for those things that are a higher priority. Some possible ideas include:

- Pursuing hobbies
- Reading for enjoyment
- Listening to music
- Going for walks
- Taking exercise classes
- Visiting with friends
- Practicing relaxation exercise

Source: *University of Illinois Extension*

Older adults often find themselves faced with many stresses, such as a major illness, reduced mobility, deterioration or death of a spouse, and a shrinking circle of friends. Each of these stresses can increase the risk of a person becoming depressed. Read the issue and answer True or False to the questions below.

1. Antidepressant medications can have strong sedative properties and can make people clumsy and likely to fall. T F
2. Depression can occur with some illnesses such as heart disease and diabetes. T F
3. Symptoms of depression displayed by older people may look different from those in younger people. T F
4. Treating sleep disorders, like insomnia, helps people feel less depressed. T F
5. Many older adults may be ashamed to admit when they feel “blue,” thinking that it is a sign of weakness or failure. T F
6. The worst thing a sleepless person can do is drink alcohol. T F
7. A moderate amount of alcohol is up to two drinks per day for men and up to one drink per day for women. T F
8. Older people do not feel the effects of alcohol more and for a longer period than younger people. T F
9. Taking alcohol with some pain medications and anti-anxiety drugs can make a person overly sleepy, more likely to have heart problems, and, most important, more likely to overdose. T F
10. Once a person is past the age of 40, the effects of alcohol use are not a lot worse. T F

KEY: 1. T 2. T 3. T 4. T 5. T 6. T 7. T 8. F 9. T 10. F