Caregiving Through the Holidays

WHAT IS REALISTIC TO EXPECT OF:

- Yourself
- Your Loved One(s)
- Your Family
- Your Holiday Celebrations

Note: LET GO OF THE “SHOULD”S”!!!
It’s OK to make NEW holiday plans!

To Ask
BEFORE THE HOLIDAYS

✓ What holiday activities do you truly want to preserve?

✓ What will it take to accomplish that?

✓ What would you really like to cross off of your list? Delegate???

✓ Are there interesting, meaningful activities that could replace “higher energy” activities?

To Ask
To Help Your Loved One ENJOY the Holidays

✓ What is your loved one’s endurance?

✓ What is your loved one’s tolerance for stimulation?

✓ Do you need to prepare visiting family and friends for changes in your loved one’s appearance, abilities, or behavior?

✓ Will travel be stressful for you and/or your loved one?

✓ What accommodations would be needed for travel?
Ideas for **SIMPLIFYING** Holiday Traditions

✓ SCALE DOWN!
✓ A pot-luck holiday meal is fine.
✓ Get reservations at a restaurant.
✓ Use bakeries.
✓ Draw names for a gift exchange.
✓ Purchase gift cards.
✓ Make a donation to a worthy cause in the name of the family/group.
✓ Get DVDs of favorite holiday movies, concerts or productions to view together.
✓ Go easy on the decorating.

**Advising Others of Your Needs at the Holidays**

✓ Share how life has changed for you and your loved one with your family and share the changes you need to make in your holiday activities.
✓ Be mindful of your tone, no demands, no accusations. Just the facts.
✓ Invite suggestions. *You may get some creative ideas and offers of help!*
✓ Recognize changes in holiday traditions may be difficult for some family members.  

**DO NOT ACCEPT GUILT!**

**Reach OUT for Respite Care!!**

Respite care provides temporary relief to a caregiver from caregiving responsibilities. Sources of Respite:

- Family, friends, neighbors – ask early so they can plan to help you during the holidays.
- Paid respite workers – home health aides
- Adult Day Services
- Explore programs that help with the cost of respite care.

Eldercare Locator: www.eldercare.acl.gov
Monitoring Your Stress Level

H.A.L.T.S.

A self check-in strategy
Avoid becoming too:

Hungry
Angry
Lonely
Tired
Scared

Hungry?
Check In With Yourself

✓ Energy requires fuel. When did you last eat and drink?
✓ Energy bars are good in a pinch. But a quiet, unhurried, satisfying meal provides both physical and emotional nurturing. You don’t have to do the cooking. Order take out or use a delivery service.
✓ Or, put it out to family and friends that bringing in a meal to free up some time during the holidays would be a wonderful gift!

Managing Your Anger

✓ Anger happens.
✓ When anger becomes the predominant response to all life situations, it is unhealthy and potentially deadly.
✓ Anger is typically a “cover” emotion for fear, frustration or hurt. Pay attention to how often you feel angry. Take time to consider the underlying emotions. Identifying the true emotion is the first step in dealing with it. Journaling is a helpful way to process your emotions and is readily available to a caregiver.
✓ Seek a Healthy Outlet for Anger!!
Combating Loneliness

✓ Caregivers are at HIGHER risk for isolation and loneliness than the general population. These feelings tend to surface even more during the holidays.
✓ ENCOURAGE visits from friends and family – even if they need to be brief. They may be concerned about upsetting your routine. Let them know the best times to visit, what to expect of your loved one, and what to expect within the household.
✓ The demands of caregiving pose a challenge in maintaining our vital connections to others. Set a goal to catch up with an old friend, classmate or neighbor SOMETIME over the holidays!

Sleep!!!!

✓ DEEP, UNINTERRUPTED, RESTFUL SLEEP is essential for all of us. It can be particularly difficult for a caregiver to manage this.
✓ SCHEDULE sleep time, while someone provides you with respite care. Put it on your calendar!
✓ At holiday time SCHEDULE YOUR RESPITE CARE EARLY!!
✓ Remember: Caffeine, and nicotine are stimulants and can prevent restful sleep. Alcohol has an initial sedative effect—but can cause you to awaken later and have difficulty getting back to sleep.
Dealing with Fear

✔ Fear is an emotion that can “drive the bus” for any of us if we let it.
✔ Uncertainty lies beneath many of our fears.
✔ Caregivers often live day to day with uncertainty on many fronts. Fear can become ingrained.
✔ Try to pinpoint what idea is at the base of the fear. Perhaps it isn’t accurate. Share your concern with someone you trust to help you gain some perspective.
✔ Reach out to experts for information to help in problem-solving.

Build in Downtime

Allow yourself time each day to just “Be”
NO PHONE!
NO COMPUTER! NO TV!
Rest Your Mind!
Breathe!
YOU CAN DO THIS!!

Through the Holidays and Beyond...

KNOW THAT:
✔ You are Body, Mind, and Spirit
✔ All of these aspects of your HUMANNESS Require Nurturing for you to Remain a Healthy, Whole Person.
✔ Tune in to yourself. If you struggle with making changes, there is help.
✔ Please reach out!!
This information is provided by:
The National Family Caregiver Support Program

This is a nationally funded program operated in Central Ohio by the Central Ohio Area Agency on Aging (COAAA). It offers caregiver workshops and funds services designed to assist caregivers on a short term basis. The services include: information and assistance, counseling, respite, and other supplemental services.

Request a copy or download our other guides:
- Central Ohio Older Adults Resource Guide
- The Caregiver Toolbox
- Central Ohio Long Term Care & Hospice Guide
- Central Ohio Older Adults Housing & Home Repair Guide
- Central Ohio Private Homecare Guide
- Central Ohio Utility Guide
- Central Ohio Prescription Guide
- Central Ohio Transportation Guide
- Central Ohio Support Group Guide
- Central Ohio Respite Guide
- Central Ohio Moving & Transitions Guide
- Books, Videos, and Websites for Family Caregivers.
- Central Ohio Kinship Care Guide
- Central Ohio In Home Care Guide
- Central Ohio Pet Guide

The COAAA also provides monthly Caregiver Support Groups & Information Sessions. For more information, call 1-800-589-7277 or visit www.coaaa.org.

Or in your county, call one of these agencies:
- Delaware-SourcePoint 740-363-6677
- Fairfield-Meals on Wheels 740-681-5050
- Fayette-Community Action Commission of Fayette Co. 740-335-7282
- Franklin-Franklin Co. Office on Aging 614-525-6200
- Licking-Licking Co. Aging Program 740-345-0821 or 1-800-452-0097
- Madison-Madison Co. Senior Center 740-852-3001
- Pickaway-Pickaway County Senior Center 740-474-8831
- Union-Union County Senior Services 937-644-1010