



Dane County Caregiver Program

Jane De Broux
Caregiver Specialist



Reducing Caregiver Stress During the Holidays: Adjust Expectations and Prepare in Advance

Caregivers often feel frazzled during the holidays. While many people look forward to the hustle and bustle and connecting with family and friends, others anticipate the season as a time of stress, busyness, or, in some cases, sadness.

People who have experienced changes due to Alzheimer's, stroke, or other medical conditions may feel a sense of loss during the holidays. Their caregivers may feel overwhelmed by trying to keep up holiday traditions while continuing to provide care. Caregivers may also anticipate that changes in physical health, behavior, and personality in their care partners may make others who are present uncomfortable. This can leave caregivers feeling responsible for their loved ones *and* worrying about the feelings and experiences of others.

If you experience anxiety over the holiday season, here are some ideas to help reduce stress this holiday:

Adjust your expectations. You may not be able to do everything you've always done in the past. Talk with your family and friends and choose a few activities that are central to your experience of the holidays. For persons with dementia, traditions from the past are more likely to have meaning than newer ideas.

Ask for help with holiday tasks. Involve other family members and friends in cooking, baking, decorating, shopping, or sending cards. It reduces your stress and provides you and your care partner with opportunities to connect and socialize. Write down tasks that need to be completed so you can be specific when people offer to help.

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Prepare family and friends before getting together. Let guests who visit infrequently know in advance about changes in your care partner's condition. Let them know how to communicate with your care partner most effectively and what they can expect.

Offer suggestions about gifts. Provide ideas for thoughtful/useful gifts for your care partner. Set up online wish lists or registries and provide tips on where they might purchase them, particularly if they are specialty items like adaptive devices, electronics, or even treats to accommodate special dietary needs. Be sure to let gift givers know what might make it easier for you to continue providing quality care as well. Gift certificates for dining, laundry, or cleaning services are some ideas.

Keep Caring for Yourself at the Top of Your List

It can be tempting to fall into unhealthy behaviors to try and cope—drinking more alcohol, overeating, exercising less, and missing out on sleep. It's a slippery slope that can make the holidays more challenging than they need to be. You can keep self care at the top of your list with a little reflection and some planning and preparation.

Take some time to note the holiday activities or people that trigger stress for you and anticipate topics that might be best avoided. Connect with someone you can touch base with at gatherings for support and a break. Wherever you can, focus on the people and activities you do enjoy and engage in as many as you can.

Simplify and streamline wherever possible.

When you are able to let go of unrealistic expectations and be present for moments of joy, you will be able to focus on what's important to you and those you love.

Wishing everyone peace, love, and joy this holiday season.

—Jane DeBroux, Caregiver Specialist



Monthly MIPPA Moment: Part D Changes

MIPPA (Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act) has a goal of educating older adults on Medicare's cost-saving benefits & preventive services.

The Medicare Prescription Payment Plan (MPPP) allows people with Part D to pay their out-of-pocket prescription drug costs in monthly installments instead of all at once. You are not automatically enrolled in the program, so you must opt in. Anyone with a Part D plan can opt into the program at any time during the year beginning in January. Keep in mind the MPPP only applies to Part D and Medicare Advantage plans that offer Part D benefits.

If you opt-in to the MPPP, you will not pay for medications at the pharmacy when you pick up your prescription. Instead, your Part D plan will pay the pharmacy, and your plan will send you bills for the amount you owe during each of the remaining months of the year. This is a way to spread your out-of-pocket medication costs out over the year, paying part of the costs each month up to the maximum amount of \$2000 in total for the year.

You or your authorized representative can submit an election request to join a MPPP at the time you enroll into a Part D plan. You can submit this request by paper, phone, or online. Your Part D plan will process your enrollment request within 24 hours.

The MPPP is NOT a cost savings program, so it is always a good time to review your current plan costs, with other affordable options, including assistance for low-income individuals such as the [Extra Help](#) program or [Senior-Care](#).

Adapted from [Adapted from cms.gov](#)

***For more MIPPA Program information, call
MIPPA Program Specialist, Leilani Amundson, at 608-240-7458.***

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Date Time Topic A LEADING VOICE FOR CAREGIVERS

**All sessions will be available on Zoom and/or the telephone. Your choice!
You may log in or call in to participate**

Wednesday December 4 11:00 am Eastern
10:00 am Central
9:00 am Mountain
8:00 am Pacific

Tips for Managing Caregiver Stress with Elliot Montgomery Sklar, PhD and Lucy Barylak, MSW *We often know what we need to do, but it's hard to practice – and this is a good time of the year for a reminder! Join us for a program focused on identifying common stressors among caregivers, and tips for managing them. We'll share many resources and practical strategies to support your caregiving journey all year long.*

Monday December 9 1:00 pm Eastern
12:00 pm Central
11:00 am Mountain
10:00 am Pacific

Grief and the Holidays with Linda White *Join us for a compassionate and informative presentation on navigating the complexities of grief during the holiday season. Learn practical coping strategies, emotional management techniques, and ways to support loved ones who are grieving. This session will provide valuable insights and tools to help you and your family through this challenging time. ****Sponsored by the North Central Texas Caregiver Teleconnection*****

Monday December 16 1:00 pm Eastern
12:00 pm Central
11:00 am Mountain
10:00 am Pacific

Regreso a Casa para Las Fiestas Navideñas (10 señales de advertencia) con Maxine P. Vieyra *Los cuidadores pueden sentirse abrumados por mantener las tradiciones mientras brindan atención y respetan a las precauciones de seguridad. Compartiremos consejos e ideas para disfrutar de forma segura el tiempo con la familia y amigos durante las vacaciones de navidad y año nuevo.*

Wednesday December 18 12:00 pm Eastern
11:00 am Central
10:00 am Mountain
9:00 am Pacific

Communicating with Children, Adolescents, and Families About Dementia with Hollie Glover, MA, LPC, NCC *This program will answer difficult questions asked by children and adolescents regarding dementia and the disease progression. It will provide adults with the skills needed to navigate dementia and the disease progression and reduce apprehensiveness that may arise when interacting with individuals living with dementia. Finally, it will increase awareness of how dementia may impact the family dynamic.*



A program of the WellMed Charitable Foundation
Register online at www.caregiverteleconnection.org or call 866.390.6491 Toll Free



Winter Series



This interactive engagement experience is made available at no cost to participants thanks to generous funding and support from the Family Caregiver Alliance (FCA). Our goal is modeling compassionate engagement with those experiencing dementia, as well as providing a fun "escape" for hardworking family caregivers.

**Register
Now**



DATES:

- 11/26 - Let's Embrace Dance Festivals Around the World!
- 12/3 - Let's Discover Unusual and Surprising Cameras & Their Unique Stories!
- 12/10 - Let's Travel to Portugal!
- 12/17- Let's Learn About and Explore Unusual Baby Animals!
- 12/24 - Let's Celebrate the Winter Solstice & Other Winter Events!
- 12/31 - Let's Welcome the New Year with Music!

**PLEASE JOIN US EVERY
TUESDAY
NOV 26TH-DEC 31ST
FROM 1PM-2PM (PT)**