

Caregiver Corner

Ideas and Information for People Caring for Others

May and June 2020 / 607-778-2411 / www.gobroomecounty.com/senior

Caregiver Presentations Temporarily Suspended Due to Coronavirus

The Broome County Office for Aging is temporarily suspending our in-person events, including monthly presentations for caregivers. We hope to resume our regular schedule soon, but this will depend on public health rules and guidelines. Though we can't meet in person for the time being, please know that Caregiver Services is still here for you! You can reach our office by phone: (607) 778-2411 or email: OFA@BroomeCounty.US, Monday through Friday from 8 am – 4 pm.

Caregiver Phone Chats



Let's chat! These informal discussions are open to caregivers of any age.

To join the call:
dial (607) 778-6547

When prompted, enter the following numbers, followed by the pound (#) sign:

Meeting number – 2187#
Access Code – 123456#

Date: Monday, May 4
Monday, June 1
Time: 1:00-2:30 PM

Date: Wednesday, May 20
Wednesday, June 17
Time: 9:30-11:00 AM

Reducing Caregiver Stress Amid Coronavirus Outbreak

As millions of families across the country balance the responsibilities of caring for a loved one with Alzheimer's disease with the ongoing changes caused by the Coronavirus outbreak, the Alzheimer's Foundation of America (AFA) is providing tips to help caregivers lower their stress levels.

"Reducing stress is always important for caregivers, and even more so now," said Charles J. Fuschillo, Jr., AFA's President and Chief Executive Officer. "Disruptions in daily routines, social isolation, and anxiety are all added stressors caused by the coronavirus, but there are steps caregivers can take to help reduce stress and take care of themselves so that they can continue to provide care to their loved ones."

AFA suggests the following tips for Alzheimer's caregivers to help them reduce stress:

- **Stay in touch.** Social isolation and social distancing because of the coronavirus doesn't mean cutting off contact with others. FaceTime, phone calls, text messages and emails with loved ones and friends are all ways to stay connected, even when you can't leave the house or have visitors.
- **Be adaptable and positive.** Your attitude influences stress levels for both you and the person you're caring for. Focus on how to adjust to the situation in a constructive way. For example, if you're loved one's regular adult day program is closed to protect public safety, there are easy, fun activities you can do at home to keep them active and engaged. If you can't eat out at your favorite restaurant, see if they're now delivering.

- **Deal with what you can control.** Outside factors like the coronavirus outbreak are out of your control: how you react to them is not. Following public health guidelines, eating properly, setting a routine, getting a good night's sleep and prioritizing self-care are all helpful and well within your control.
- **Clear and refresh your mind.** Exercise, yoga, meditating, listening to music or even taking a few deep breaths can all help relax the mind and reduce stress (and be done indoors). Find something that works for you and do it regularly!
- **Don't overload on news.** Staying informed is important, but constantly checking news sources and social media can add to stress levels. Getting news from trusted sources (i.e. the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention or your state/local health department) and setting a schedule to get news updates (i.e. 6 pm every night for half an hour) can help.
- **Share your feelings.** Sometimes just talking about your stress can help relieve it. Whether it's with someone in your support structure, a professional or even a stranger, don't be reluctant to open up. AFA's Helpline has licensed social workers available for caregivers seven days to provide support or even just listen.

AFA's Helpline, staffed entirely by licensed social workers trained in dementia care, is open seven days a week to help provide additional tips about reducing caregiver stress, caregiving during the coronavirus outbreak and more. The Helpline can be reached by calling 866-232-8484 or visiting www.alzfdn.org and clicking the blue and white chat icon in the right hand corner of the page.

Source: <https://alzfdn.org/reducing-caregiver-stress-amid-coronavirus-outbreak/>

The 2020 Census: Tips for Family Caregivers

The census helps bring funds directly to programs that affect your friends and family. When you respond to the census, you help ensure your community gets its fair share of hundreds of millions of dollars in federal funds. By using Census Bureau statistics, community planners can get a better idea of where older Americans live and how close they are to the services they need.

For example, the information you provide can help provide funding for the following:

- Medicaid and Medicare health insurance programs
- Supportive housing for the elderly and people with disabilities, including Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers
- Enforcing laws against age discrimination
- Services including Adult Day Care, community center lunches, and home-delivered meals
- Nutrition benefits to supplement the food budget of individuals and families (SNAP – Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program)
- Intervention services, emergency medical services, emergency shelters, and counseling for older adults suffering from abuse or neglect.

To complete the census online, please visit 2020census.gov. You can also complete the census over the phone by calling 1-844-330-2020, or by returning your census form in the mail. (Note – not all households will receive a paper form in the mail right away. Most will receive a paper census form if they do not respond to online or phone options to complete the census.)

Finally, a note on confidentiality. Responses to the 2020 Census are safe, secure, and protected by Federal Law. Answers can only be used to produce statistics for resource allocation and the protection of your rights – they cannot be used against you in any way or shared with anyone, including the FBI, ICE, or local law enforcement.

Adapted from: <https://local.aarp.org/news/the-2020-census-tips-for-family-caregivers-ny-2020-02-21.html>

Coping with Isolation During the Coronavirus Outbreak

Practical advice on staying connected and maintaining your emotional health
by Aaron Kassraie, AARP, March 23, 2020

With older Americans being instructed to stay home and avoid contact with others to deter the spread of COVID-19, feelings of isolation are naturally emerging — especially among those who are home alone. We asked Val Walker, an expert on coping with isolation and author of *The Art of Comforting* and the forthcoming *400 Friends and No One to Call* (due out March 26, from Central

Recovery Press), for practical advice on ways to stay connected and maintain mental and emotional health.

How can we avoid feelings of isolation while stuck at home?

Find one person with whom you can share your own worries and feelings over the phone. Is there a comforting friend, family member, therapist or chaplain for you to call, to talk openly and privately? In these challenging times, it is perfectly natural to feel afraid, lonely or overwhelmed. If you have no one with whom you can talk, call your local agency on aging and find out how to gain support. If you have previously seen a psychotherapist or faith-based professional, consider reaching out to them.

How can I catch up and check in on friends without leaving my house?

Take the initiative to call your fellow older adults to check in with them and practice good listening skills. Make a contact list of people to call and check in daily or every few days. Start with those in your close circle of friends and then move outward. You can go through your old letters, address books, alumni contacts, email addresses and memorabilia to reconnect with “long-lost” friends, classmates or coworkers who you haven't been in touch with. It might be uplifting and reassuring to reach out to them — and they would likely love to get a call. Provide empathy, understanding and comfort by listening with acceptance and compassion. Try not to judge others or hand out quick advice before you have listened first. You can also share what is on your mind. Believe it or not, we often can find support by offering our support. We can exchange our knowledge with one another about local resources for medicine, medical services, stores, food pantries, supplies and news updates on the coronavirus.

What are the best ways to connect with friends and family using technology?

Many older adults use videoconferencing such as Skype, FaceTime and Zoom. This allows for conversations to happen — and in these times, we need to have good conversations and “think out loud” as we cope with coronavirus issues. It can be helpful for a family member or friend to teach how to use these services and apps. At an assisted living program where I work part-time, I have been teaching seniors how to stay in touch with their family members and loved ones by using their smartphones and iPads. But

the most important tool is the phone. Other suggestions include reaching out the old-fashioned way with greeting cards and letters, and sending text messages or emails with your photos and checking in.

How can I avoid feeling anxious and remain engaged with others despite my age making me vulnerable to the virus?

Offering your time to volunteer and help others in your community is helpful for handling anxiety and helplessness. Some volunteer programs can be done from home. When we reach out to others who may be even more isolated than we are, it is psychologically healing and calming. Humans generally feel better when they have a sense of purpose and a sense of control by taking action. Contact volunteer coordinators through [volunteermatch.com](https://www.volunteermatch.com) or call your United Way office or senior center to find out about volunteering-from-home opportunities. Make gifts for people and get creative. Write, paint, knit, make crafts, cards, pillows or puppets. Find projects that are creative and rewarding, especially if it will cheer up someone else you love. Share podcasts, emails, calls and links about your favorite books, radio shows and movies with your loved ones and friends so they have more entertainment. Enjoy music and play all kinds of soothing and cheerful sounds to boost your mood.

Source: <https://www.aarp.org/health/conditions-treatments/info-2020/staying-connected-during-coronavirus.html>

Editor's note: Please call the Office for Aging for more information on combatting social isolation during these challenging times: (607) 778-2411.

If you're feeling overwhelmed, please call the New York State COVID-19 Emotional Support Line: 1-844-863-9314. This helpline is staffed by volunteers, including mental health professionals, who are trained in crisis counseling.

The Caregiver Services Program is sponsored by a grant from the Administration for Community Living, New York State Office for Aging, and Broome County.

Contributions are accepted to help support this program. No one is denied service because of an inability or unwillingness to contribute and all contributions are confidential.

To make a contribution, please send checks or money orders to: Broome County Office for Aging, PO Box 1766, Binghamton, NY 13902.

Caregiver Corner

Broome County Office for Aging
60 Hawley Street
PO Box 1766
Binghamton, NY 13902-1766

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**Prefer to read on-line?**

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If you prefer to read the electronic version, we'd be glad to e-mail you a reminder when new issues are posted; we'll take you off the mailing list for the paper copies. Let us know by emailing:

ofa@co.broome.ny.us

No longer interested in Caregiver Corner?

If you no longer want a paper copy of Caregiver Corner mailed to you, please contact Erin by phone: 778-2411 or by email: Erin.Ehn@BroomeCounty.US and ask to be taken off the mailing list.

Thank you!