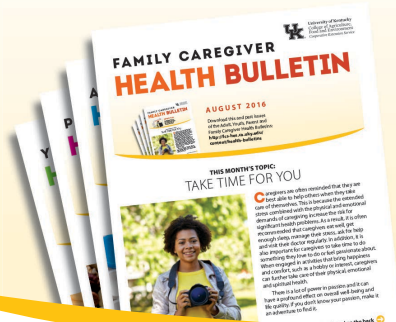


FAMILY CAREGIVER HEALTH BULLETIN



NOVEMBER 2016

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THIS MONTH'S TOPIC: TAKING CARE OF THE CAREGIVER



Sometimes the simplest acts of kindness — a smile, a hug or a small gesture — can change the course of someone's day, especially someone who serves in the roll of caregiver. Caregivers work hard, both physically and emotionally. Yet, they often do not complain or ask for help even when they are struggling. Never stop offering help, but in addition, think about other ways in which you can support a caregiver in your life.

- **Offer a smile.** A smile can change the world. They are contagious and often make people feel good because they calm insecurities, fear, hurt and even anxiety.
- **Deliver a surprise meal or nutritious snack.** Everyone has to eat. Food not only provides for the caregiver's physical needs, but planned with care and made with love, a hand-delivered meal can be

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healing in the midst of stress and change. If you don't cook, think about giving a gift card to a favorite restaurant.

- **Offer respite time.** Sometimes a caregiver has a hard time catching a break. Present the caregiver with a “coupon” offering respite care so that he/she can get away — even if it is just for a short time. If you are able, provide a gift card for a massage or movie to help encourage the caregiver to pamper him/herself.

- **Lend a hand with children.** If the caregiver is balancing both older parents and children, offer to pick up kids from school or drive them to practice. Invite the kids over for a game night or sleepover.

- **Write and send a note.** Whether a greeting card does all the talking, or you hand-write a message, receiving unexpected heartfelt mail makes a person feel good. Such kind words and caring gestures make you feel important and valued.

- **Don't just offer to help — help!** We often say, “Let me know if there is anything that I can do.” But again, most of us never call up a friend and say, please come over, I need help. Be assertive and within your boundaries, help, fix or do things as you see appropriate, such as weeding a garden, fixing a mailbox, delivering dinner, serving as a chauffeur if a person's car is in the shop or hanging holiday decorations so they come home to holiday lights, a jack-o-lantern or flag.

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- **Keep up.** The average person serves as a caregiver for 4 years and it most often does not get easier with time. It is important to remember and keep up with a caregiver as all too often they are forgotten and contacted less and less.
- **Provide reminders.** All too often caregivers neglect their own health and well-being. Remind them how important it is to take care of their own mind, body and soul so that they can continue to be healthy and able to take care of others.

No random acts of kindness are too big or small — they do not have to take a lot of money or time. But kind words, acts and gestures make others feel important and valued, reinforcing that no matter how simple, reaching out goes a long way and makes a big difference.

REFERENCE:

5 Ways to Help the Caregiver in Your Life (2016). Retrieved from <http://www.caregivers.com/blog/2013/01/help-yourcaregiver>

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