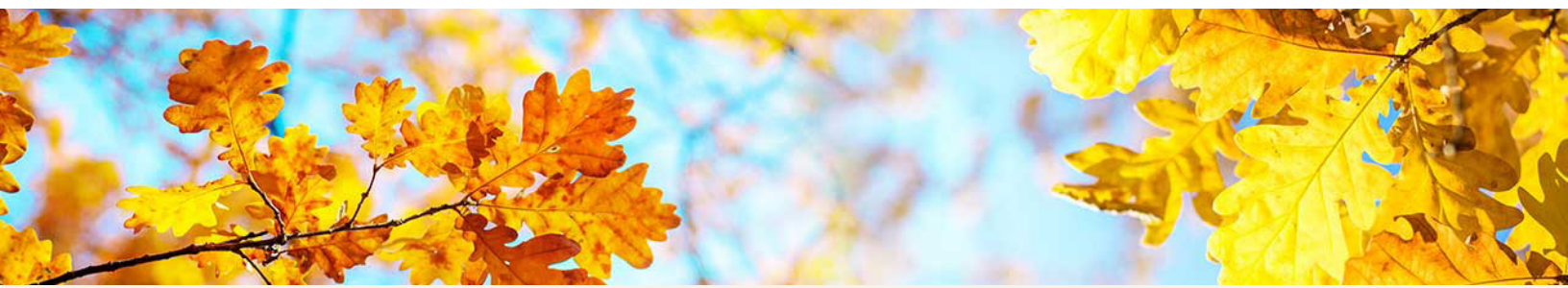


The Empowered Caregiver

Together With You on Your Ceresti-Caregiver Journey



FEATURED ARTICLE

Acknowledging Ceresti-Caregivers

We know that caregiving is not for the faint of heart.

You comfort, nurture, and care for your loved one without accolades or awards – sometimes even without a simple *thank you* in return.

Day after day, month after month, year after year, you hold the world on your shoulders, sometimes sacrificing your own financial security or wellbeing in the process. You do all of this, all the while being responsible for the feeding, bathing, dressing and safety of your loved one. And, there's no time-off associated with this job.

Through experience and self-study, you've learned the art of **meeting your loved one where he or she is** with patience and grace. This is particularly true when you're being asked the same question for the fifteenth time that day – and it's only 10:00 AM.

Over time, you've learned how creativity in your responses and maintaining a level of *predictability* can help you guide your loved one through the long hours in the most successful way.

With all of these demands placed on you, it's so very important to create your own boundaries, *starting right now*. Here's how you can do that:

- Know that your feelings are valid – acknowledge them and do not feel guilty for having them.
- Learn to say *no* when necessary.
- Accept help from others when it is offered.
- Take care of your mental health so you can build resilience.
- Be realistic in your expectations of your loved one – and in yourself.
- Learn about your loved one's conditions so you can be more aware of what to expect over time.
- Develop a support system of your own.
- Learn the skills you'll need to be a more confident and compassionate caregiver. Ceresti's Caregiver Support Program can help with both of these things.

We honor you, Ceresti-Caregiver, for showing us what it means to have courage, kindness, generosity, and an unflinching commitment to keeping your loved one healthy, happy and safe.

By Marilyn Abrahamson - Brain-Health Education Specialist at Ceresti Health.

BITE-SIZED TIPS FOR A BETTER BRAIN

ADD ACTIVITY TO YOUR DAY

Moderate to high intensity aerobic exercise (aka cardio) isn't just good for your heart - *it's good for your brain too!*

Exercise not only improves your cardiac function, it also reduces stress, elevates your mood and increases your mental energy and alertness. You don't need much to make a noticeable difference - twenty to thirty minutes of moderate cardio such as biking, swimming or even brisk walking a few times a week has been shown to have positive long-term impacts on cognitive function.

So get moving today, because *what's good for your heart is good for your brain!*

For more caregiver-resources, visit Ceresti's **Brain Health Education Portal** by going to brainhealth.ceresti.com. Hover over the **Caregiver Support** tab at the top of the page and click on **Resources**. If this is your first time visiting the portal, use the invitation code **GIVECARE** when you register.

CALMING THE CAREGIVER MIND

Guilt

Guilt is what you feel when you think you've done something wrong. For a family caregiver, this feeling of guilt can come in many forms.

- There's guilt for not having been able to prevent your loved one from becoming ill or injured in the first place
- Guilt for the feelings you have about your role as a caregiver
- Guilt about "not liking" your loved one, at times
- Guilt about having your own needs or feeling selfish if you want to visit a friend or see a movie
- Guilt over not *doing, caring or being enough*

How to cope with caregiver-guilt

- You can start by forgiving yourself – because no one is perfect all the time.
- Let go of the *shoulds* or *shouldn'ts*. "*I should have been there last night.*" or, "*I shouldn't have gone home early yesterday.*"
- Acknowledge that you need help – caregiving is rarely a one-person job. "*No one can do this as well as I can so I have to be there all the time.*"

When the feeling of guilt hits you, flip the script. Tell yourself:

- I am human, so...
- Sometimes, I make mistakes
- I can get impatient
- I need time to regroup and refresh
- Even if things don't always go perfectly, I'm doing the best I can.

As with all emotions, guilt needs to be acknowledged for what it is - *a form of negative self-talk*. It can weigh you down and impact your ability to provide care to your loved one as well as to yourself.

As always, ask for help when you need to. Utilize your support system and ask family members or trusted friends to step in for you when you need time and space for self-care. Once you free yourself from feelings of guilt, you'll once again feel like the skilled and compassionate Ceresti caregiver you know you are every day.

How Often Should I Visit?



Contributed by Sarah Bernas, Ceresti Coach

When you can no longer provide the level of care your loved one needs to thrive and remain safe, the decision to place them in a residential care facility is never easy. No matter how desperately you wish you could continue caring for your loved one at home, it may no longer be sustainable.

On the bright side, placing your loved one in a high quality residential care-facility can allow you to return to your role as loving spouse, devoted child, relative or friend - and this can be a gift to both of you.

Visiting is important, but also challenging.

As your loved one settles into their new living situation, it's important to be a part of the transition. In this way, you can both adjust to the new normal, and visiting is an important and meaningful aspect of this transition. Shorter, more frequent visits can be more enjoyable and less overwhelming than sporadic visits that last for many hours.

It should be acknowledged that more frequent visits can be challenging for you when other aspects of your life compete for your time. Adding to that challenge, you'll want to try scheduling your visits *in between* activities that involve social engagement, recreation, resting or mealtime. Your loved one will likely acclimate to their new living situation more easily if they are kept actively engaged between your visits.

How to spend your time when visiting

During your visit, it's important to connect with your loved one on a personal level, whenever possible. To help inspire this personal connection:

- Talk about the hobbies they used to (or still) enjoy;
- Bring a favorite knick-knack or other item from their home that can stir up positive memories and stories
- Look at old family pictures together and allow your loved one to tell you stories about them. Even if you've heard these stories many times before, listen as if it's your first time hearing them.

Create a space that fosters comfort, love, and safety. When words fail, physical touch can be comforting as well. A gentle hand on theirs or a chair pushed closer to them will express how you feel. These small gestures can leave positive lasting effects when your visit is over.

When it's time for you to leave, remember that you don't necessarily need to say the words, "good-bye", which can feel too *final*. Ending your visit with an "I love you" or "see you soon" can leave your loved one with a sense that *you'll be back again soon*.

Know you're doing what's best for your loved one...

Making the decision to place your loved one in a residential care facility is never easy and may cause feelings of guilt and self-doubt. Acknowledge that this was a decision not made lightly. You chose what you believed was best for your loved one, for you and your family.

Once the decision has been made and your loved one begins settling in, it's time to move forward and focus on helping them to transition to their new lifestyle. Focus on the positives. You may notice that the level of activity and social engagement they're now being offered is more than you could have given them at home.

Continuing to be a part of your loved one's life is key to helping them to acclimate to their new-normal - and yours. Initially, visiting your loved one in a new place may not feel natural, but you can create meaningful and loving experiences during your visits by simply learning to relax and be in the moment. Ultimately, you're likely to find that your presence and undivided attention are all your loved one needs to feel reassured that they are loved, safe and well-cared for.



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*The season of family gatherings is upon us. Ask your physician how getting the **Covid-19 and flu vaccines** can help to **protect you and your family.***

WHAT'S NEW IN CERESTI?

Brain-Health is for Everyone!

Brain-health is an essential part of overall health.

Knowing what you need to do to reduce your risks for developing a memory disorder is the *first powerful step* in prevention. In addition, studies show that engaging in the right types of activities can even help stave off cognitive-decline attributed to age.

That's where Ceresti's new **Caregiver Brain-Health** course comes in... and it's available to you *right now on your tablet!*

As a companion to this course, you'll also receive a dedicated *Caregiver Brain-Health Notebook* to help you stay organized and motivated throughout the course.

In the **Caregiver Brain-Health** course, you'll learn how to:

- Live a lifestyle that supports your healthy brain
- Increase happiness and productivity
- Compensate for age-related memory-glitches

And so much more!

Once you complete your first module, you'll hear from your dedicated brain health coach who will be there to answer all of your brain health questions and support you along your brain health journey.

Look for your **Caregiver Brain Health** course modules on your tablet today!