

The Empowered Caregiver

Together With You on Your Ceresti-Caregiver Journey



FEATURED ARTICLE

Caring for a Family Member During the Holiday Season

Caring for a loved one is always stressful, but the demands and the hustle-bustle of the holiday season can compound the level of both physical and emotional stress you may be feeling right now. Adding on to that, knowing this could be your last holiday season spent together can compound the pressure you feel to make the holidays even more special for your loved one.

Making the holiday season - or any season - feel special.

You may have a specific vision for how you see yourself and your loved one spending time together, but given the circumstances, it's important to stay realistic in your expectations.

Regardless of your vision, it's most important that you focus most on the joy you both feel when you're connecting, telling stories and reminiscing together. And as you do this, remain in the moment – resist thinking about all the other things you have to do. Staying mindful will help you enjoy this time together more. All the while, play holiday music that makes your loved one feel happy and calm.

If you're feeling overwhelmed, you can alleviate the pressure by taking control of your tasks and by doing the following:

- Make a list of everything you need to do, then cross off anything that's not critical. You may even be able to cut that list in half!
- Instead of baking and cooking from scratch, consider getting baked goods from a bakery and ordering food from a local restaurant.

- Instead of shopping for gifts, consider gift-cards this year. Some people enjoy shopping for exactly what they want, especially when the cost is covered by a gift card.
- If someone offers their help, don't think about it – just say yes!
- Give yourself ten minutes a day to sit and do nothing. Close your eyes and give yourself a well-deserved mental break. You'll find you have more energy to continue to give of yourself after you refresh and recharge.

Things may not go as you planned them to happen, but resist feeling disappointed if this happens. Allow things to happen as they do; you can only control so much.

No matter the time of year, practicing gratitude can be life changing.

The holidays can be overwhelming for so many reasons, but they can also cause difficult emotions to bubble up to the surface. If you're feeling overwhelmed by sadness or other difficult emotions, it's important to seek help. Contact your physician for a referral to a mental health professional immediately so you can get the help you need.

In addition, keep in mind that the practice of gratitude is a simple technique that's also well-worth trying. It's not meant to replace a mental health professional, but can be a surprisingly effective addition to those services.

Here's how it's done.

When you wake up and before going to sleep at night, fully focus on three things (or more) that make you feel grateful.

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When you do this, you effectively begin and end your day with a feeling of peace and calm, giving you a more positive outlook on life overall. This is especially important during the holiday season, which can be so difficult, especially when life itself has become challenging.

We, here at Ceresti, wish you, your loved one and your family a warm and wonderful holiday season.

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

CALMING THE CAREGIVER MIND

IMPATIENCE

Do you ever become impatient while caring for your loved one? Perhaps, as a Ceresti Care Partner, you offer your help to your loved one freely and from your heart - but because you are human, it's not always easy to remain patient and compassionate day in and day out.

You're in good company.

Everyone has days that don't go as planned. You may feel tired and overwhelmed, yet you start each day helping your loved one to get up, dressed, fed and all too often, out of the house for a doctor's appointment by 11:00 a.m.

Let's not forget to acknowledge that you do all of this, in addition to your own personal and family responsibilities.

Adding on to this, your loved one may be slow to move, or resistant to your help. They may refuse to use their walker or cane despite having fallen twice in the past week.

With all of this, it's natural to feel impatient sometimes – *and all of the emotions that go along with it.*

How to cope with occasional impatience in caregiving

When impatience strikes, you must first allow yourself to *feel your feelings.*

When you're on a schedule and there's a lot that needs to be done, it's only natural for you to want to speed things up. You also want your loved one to help you by accepting your care and by doing things safely but quickly... but this isn't always realistic.

Also, understand what you can and can't control. You can leave the cane or walker for your loved one but you can't always make them use it.

Most importantly – *and this may seem like it sounds too simple,* but try to leave yourself extra time to accomplish your tasks. This way, you can get them done slowly, safely and without (or, with less) frustration.

Ultimately, remember to take care of yourself. When you get good nutrition, personal time, exercise and sleep, your coping skills for all situations will naturally improve.

For more information about brain health or caregiver support please visit the **Ceresti Brain Health Education portal** at brainhealth.ceresti.com and enter code **GIVECARE**.

A BRAIN HEALTHIER WAY OF EATING

The Mediterranean and MIND Diets

It's not always easy to maintain healthy dietary habits. Throw in a few holidays and a few weeks' worth of holiday meals and before you know it, you've fallen off the proverbial wagon entirely.

As the saying goes, *everything in moderation*.

It's a great saying, because if you allow yourself to fall off the wagon on occasion, you're less likely to feel deprived - and that's the key to success.

We all know that healthy lifestyle habits can help prevent and lower the risk for health issues such as diabetes and heart disease. But, did you know that your healthy habits can also help protect your brain and reduce the risk for age-related cognitive decline?

Eating foods that come from the *Mediterranean* and the *MIND diet* plans can boost your overall health and improve your brain health – and that includes reducing the risk for cognitive decline as you get older.

What is the MIND diet?

The *MIND diet* (*Mediterranean-Dash Intervention for Neurodegenerative Delay*) is similar to the Mediterranean diet, but with a specific focus on foods that contribute to brain health. For a well-rounded start, make sure to include a wide variety of vegetables, legumes, whole grains, nuts and seeds. Avoid processed foods, sugary sweets, excessive alcohol and red meats.

To follow the diet properly, consume at least:

- Three servings of whole grains a day
- One serving of leafy greens plus another vegetable each day
- A lean protein such as poultry each day
- A handful of berries and nuts twice a week (or more)
- A serving of beans or lentils at least every other day (or more)
- You may have one glass of red wine with dinner each evening. (If you don't enjoy wine, you may replace it with a cup of herbal tea or a serving of berries.)

Brain healthy additions:

- Whole grains (quinoa, whole wheat, oats, freekeh, bulgur, brown rice)
- Nuts and seeds, including natural (no-sugar-added) nut butters
- Leafy greens (like spinach, chard, lettuce, kale)
- Vegetables
- Fruit, especially berries
- Fish
- Olive oil
- Avocado
- Eggs

Both the Mediterranean and MIND diets are simple to follow and easy to maintain due to their variety of satisfying and delicious food choices.



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Protecting Yourself and Your Family this Holiday Season

This time of year, for people of all ages, it's common to see an uptick in viruses like colds, flu and now, the Covid-19 virus.

Covid-19

Covid-19 vaccines have been shown to be effective at protecting people from becoming seriously ill, being hospitalized, or dying. The CDC recommends staying current with the updated (bivalent) booster, even if you've already had Covid-19. As with other vaccine-preventable diseases, staying up to date with all recommended vaccines and boosters is the best way to stay protected.

That means receiving an updated (bivalent) booster if it has been at least two months since being given the last Covid-19 vaccine dose. For those who have recently had Covid-19, CDC recommends delaying the next dose (primary dose or booster) by three months from the initial positive Covid-19 test.

For those with a compromised or weakened immune system, CDC recommends talking to the doctor about getting an extra primary-series dose, if receiving either the Moderna or Pfizer-BioNTech series.

Seasonal Flu

Seasonal flu (or the influenza virus) is a contagious respiratory virus that infects the nose, throat and lungs. Anyone can get sick with the flu, and it can happen at any age – even people that are healthy can get sick. Some people are at a higher risk, particularly those that are over age 65 and those with chronic medical conditions such as diabetes, asthma, heart disease, women that are pregnant and young children.

Some additional facts about the season flu are:

- It can cause illness that ranges from mild to severe.
- Millions of people become sick with the flu each year in the U.S.
- Hundreds of thousands are hospitalized.
- Thousands to tens of thousands die from the flu.
- The most effective way to prevent the flu is by getting an annual flu vaccine.

With all of the holiday gatherings at this time of year, it's the perfect time to ask your doctor how getting the Covid-19 and flu vaccines can help protect you and your family.