

The Empowered Care Partner

Together With You on Your Ceresti-Care Partner Journey

FEATURED ARTICLE

Caring for a Family Member During the Holiday Season

Have you ever listened closely during a preflight tutorial? This often-ignored presentation teaches airline passengers the importance of *securing their own oxygen masks before helping those around them*.

The first time I saw one, I thought to myself, *"I'm not sure I could do that."*

The message? *A person can't provide proper care to another without meeting their own basic needs first.* In the case of the preflight tutorial, that basic need is oxygen. But for family care partners, it can mean so much more.

This concept is even more applicable when helping to care for a loved one goes on for months, or even years. The day-to-day rigors of being a care partner can be depleting. It can feel thankless on some days, and can offer bittersweet joy on others.

The depletion of physical, mental and emotional energy can happen so gradually, you may not even notice it until it's impossible to ignore. The feeling that you are burning out can remain hidden in the background until you've given up so much of yourself, that your entire life revolves around the job of caring for another person.

You'll know you're experiencing burnout when you see signs, such as:

- Overreacting to minor annoyances
- Feeling more anxious than usual
- Insomnia
- Problems focusing
- Resentment against your loved one

- Ignoring your own personal responsibilities
- Development of health problems or worsening of existing ones
- Overeating, smoking, taking recreational drugs or drinking alcohol

Self-care sounds like a luxury, but it isn't. It's a necessity that will fill your empty cup so you have something to give back.

How do you find balance when you're overwhelmed, depleted, stressed and burned out, and yet, the demands of each day go on and on?

Use the start of this fresh, new year to commit to a new self-care ritual that carries you through each day, each week, each month, and so on.

How can you adjust your self-care habits in 2023?

- *Schedule regular intervals of self-care into your calendar.*
- *Ask for help.* Recruit a friend or relative to help you by sitting with your loved one for a few hours each week. If you don't know someone, hire someone if it's in the budget. Make sure you leave the house and do something for yourself during that time, even if it's just to run some errands.

Or use that time to...

- Read a lighthearted book.
- Address your basic needs. Give yourself the time to use the bathroom, bathe, sit and relax, and eat a meal.

FEATURED ARTICLE

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- Try mindfulness. With practice, it only takes a moment to shift your mindset. Mindfulness is a wonderful way to quell the resentment for past deeds that can influence your ability to give compassionate care.
- So, next time you feel burned out and exhausted, keep thinking about that preflight tutorial. You've got to have your own oxygen up and running so you have what you need to give to others.

Remember the three Rs of Self-Care for Ceresti Family Care Partners: Rest, Recharge, and then Return.

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

SAME NEWSLETTER – NEW NAME!

When you picked up your newsletter today, you may have noticed something different. *We've changed the newsletter title!*

The Empowered Caregiver is now in the past. The new title is now **The Empowered Care Partner.**

Why has the title changed?

The team at Ceresti has worked closely with you, our *Ceresti Care Partners* to help us decide what to convey in our new title. We wanted it to match our values, our mission and the strong, healthy relationships we strive to foster every day.

It may seem as if there isn't much of a difference between the words *caregiver* and *care partner*. Given the importance mindset plays in everything we do, *the difference is less subtle than you may think.*

As a caregiver, you are responsible for *giving care* to your loved one. As a *care partner*, you'll *join* your loved one in their own care.

Instead of doing things **to** your loved one as you give care, you'll be doing things **with them... together.** In this way, you'll begin to see yourself *sharing* in their care. This perspective will help you connect with them in new and different ways... *the way partners connect.*

At Ceresti, we want to help you foster a healthy partnership with your loved one. We want to help you see them with respect for who they were in the past, as well as who they are today. And we want to help you see them as having purpose and value, and of course, helping them to see that same purpose and value in themselves.

For now, we'd love to know what you think! After all, we are here for you and because of you, and strongly value your opinion.

Let us know how you feel about our new title by posting your comments on the tablet in a message to your coach.

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.**

Age-Related Brain-Changes - What's Normal and What Should Spark Concern?

Senior moments, brain fog... memory slips begin as early as our 40's.

They're normal and have more to do with your *attention*, and shouldn't necessarily cause concern.

But, why is it happening?

As you age and become less professionally, socially and physically active, cognition begins to change. Skills that you don't practice begin to diminish... along with the brain pathways associated with those skills. This causes the size of the brain to shrink as well. To counteract this phenomenon, you need to challenge your brain with new knowledge, new skills and new experiences every day.

Less brain activity equals more brain shrinkage. That means, if you retire from your job, stop playing the piano, or quit the photography club, you'll begin to lose those skills - or at the very least, you'll become rusty. In that case, it's essential to replace them with new activities.

Shrinkage occurs most notably in the brain regions responsible for important skills like memory, attention, decision-making, organization, planning and judgment, the skills that take us through each day.

To fight against these changes, you can take adult classes or find a new hobby. If you need a new smartphone, don't let the fear of new technology keep you from buying one. Get a new computer or tablet, if you need one... and learn how to use it.

When do age-related brain changes typically begin?

Although it's different for everyone, most people report *slower processing speed* as the first noticeable change, typically starting in the 40's. *Anyone of a certain age* is familiar with that feeling when the information is *in there somewhere* - but it's not available at that moment.

Attention is another area that can become more elusive with age. You may become more distracted or more frequently ask people to repeat themselves, not because you didn't hear them, but because you weren't focused on them as they were talking to you.

Fortunately, *there are some aspects of brain function that improve with age!*

Studies show that *vocabulary improves, wisdom and life experience grow and expertise becomes more established.* This is why grandchildren so often seek out advice from their grandparents. *Life experience means wisdom and wisdom means better advice!*

Which age-related brain-changes should spark concern?

Common glitches, such as forgetting a name or losing your keys are common. They happen to people of all ages, and are most often associated with distraction (lack of attention) rather than memory.

More concern is warranted if everyone becomes *What's her name...* or if every object becomes a *Whatchamacallit*.

If you're misplacing items but you later find them in *inappropriate* places (like finding your reading glasses in the pantry next to the milk, which should have been in the refrigerator), this could be more concerning. Also, a visit to the doctor is warranted if you look at your glasses and - *even if only for a moment* - you're not sure *what they are, or how to use them*.

Unless these glitches are part of a pattern that includes significant examples like these, they're likely just a part of life.

Can brain aging be delayed?

Brain-health is influenced by many things; genes, experience, lifestyle, education and more. Some can be controlled and some cannot, but we **can** change the trajectory of our brain-aging by identifying the aspects that we can control and by committing to making those work in our favor.

Where do you begin???

Evaluate your lifestyle choices.

What are you eating? Do you exercise? Do you stay up late or set yourself up for a good night's sleep? How well do you manage stress? Do you learn something new each day?

All of these are lifestyle choices and habits that are modifiable (under your control). You can begin to improve your brain health by learning about each of the modifiable lifestyle choices and adopting them.

To set yourself up for success, don't make too many changes at once. Try improving one thing at a time and your brain will thank you every day.

To learn more about modifiable lifestyle choices that support a healthy brain and how to slow brain-aging, visit Ceresti's Brain Health Education Portal.

Go to brainhealth.ceresti.com. If this is your first time visiting the portal, use the invitation code **GIVECARE when you register.**



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RECOGNIZING CHANGE

WHEN YOUR LOVED ONE SEEMS "DIFFERENT"

As a care partner, your daily plate is full of things to do for your loved one as well as for yourself, your family, and others. With all those responsibilities, it's no wonder a subtle change in your loved one's condition can so easily escape your attention.

Our job at Ceresti is to help you to keep your loved one healthy and happy. We do that by supporting you in your pursuit of knowledge and understanding of the challenges before you. That's why we'll be starting a new monthly series in **The Empowered Care Partner** newsletter called **Recognizing Change**.

This monthly series is important. That's because recognizing and reporting changes in your loved one's medical condition is the key to helping you prevent worsening of medical problems.

If you notice changes in your loved one's physical abilities, behavior, cognition, activity level or personality, no matter how subtle, reporting these changes to their primary care physician is crucial – and the call should be made as soon as possible. Delays in reporting can cause the condition to become more serious by allowing more time for complications to develop.

What do changes in condition look like?

Here are some examples you may observe (this is not a complete list):

- **A behavioral change** may cause your loved one to act out uncharacteristically, crying without obvious reason, becoming unreasonably angry, oppositional, combative, or refusing to participate in self-care when this is not their usual demeanor. Conversely, if your loved one is usually active and alert, you may notice that they are more fatigued, listless or withdrawn than usual.
- **A physical change** may mean your loved one is not able to walk or move as well as they usually do, they are falling more frequently than usual or they suddenly cannot hold a fork at a meal when they are usually able to eat meals unassisted.
- **A cognitive change** can mean they are unable to perform independent tasks that they could before, such as sorting laundry, using the TV remote control or counting money. They may seem more confused, or disoriented to time, place or situation. You may notice that they seem more forgetful than usual. Cognitive change can also include new problems communicating their needs to you or they may take an unusually long time to process what you are saying to them.

The ability to recognize change in your loved one's condition is essential. Each month in this newsletter, we will dive deeper and explore more so you can sharpen and improve this important skill.