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The Empowered Care Partner



Together With You on Your Ceresti-Care Partner Journey



FEATURED ARTICLE

September is National Yoga Awareness Month

Because you are a care partner, it's likely people remind you all too often to take care of yourself – so much so that those words may begin to lose their meaning. Worse, self care may feel like just another item on your to-do list. Having stress management tools is one of the most important things you can do for your health and wellbeing, and there's no one strategy to achieve that goal – but yoga can be considered a powerful part of that toolbox for fostering feelings of positivity, peace, and relaxation.

Yoga is so beneficial for health and wellness, the entire month of September is dedicated annually to spreading awareness about the practice of yoga and its many benefits.

Yoga can address multiple issues at one time as it can help balance your mental, physical and emotional wellbeing. The meditation and mindful breathwork performed in yoga gives you strength that you can carry into your daily life. The poses can be thoughtfully choreographed to address specific needs that

can help you improve flexibility and overall feelings of physical wellbeing as well as prevent burnout. The synchronicity of these aspects of yoga together can help you get in touch with your body and relieve stress, all while offering you a sense of empowerment.

How to commit to a yoga practice

- ***Develop the habit of a daily yoga practice.*** Habits take time to form. As with anything new, it's best to begin slowly and build from there. Start with a practice that takes 5 or 10 minutes a day for the first week, and then, add 1 -2 minutes per week.
- ***Set a place and time for your yoga practice.*** Establish a set place and regular scheduled time for your yoga practice so it becomes a part of your daily routine. Sometimes, getting it done first thing in the morning will make it more likely to happen. Also, having a place to do it will make it more likely it will get done. Having this

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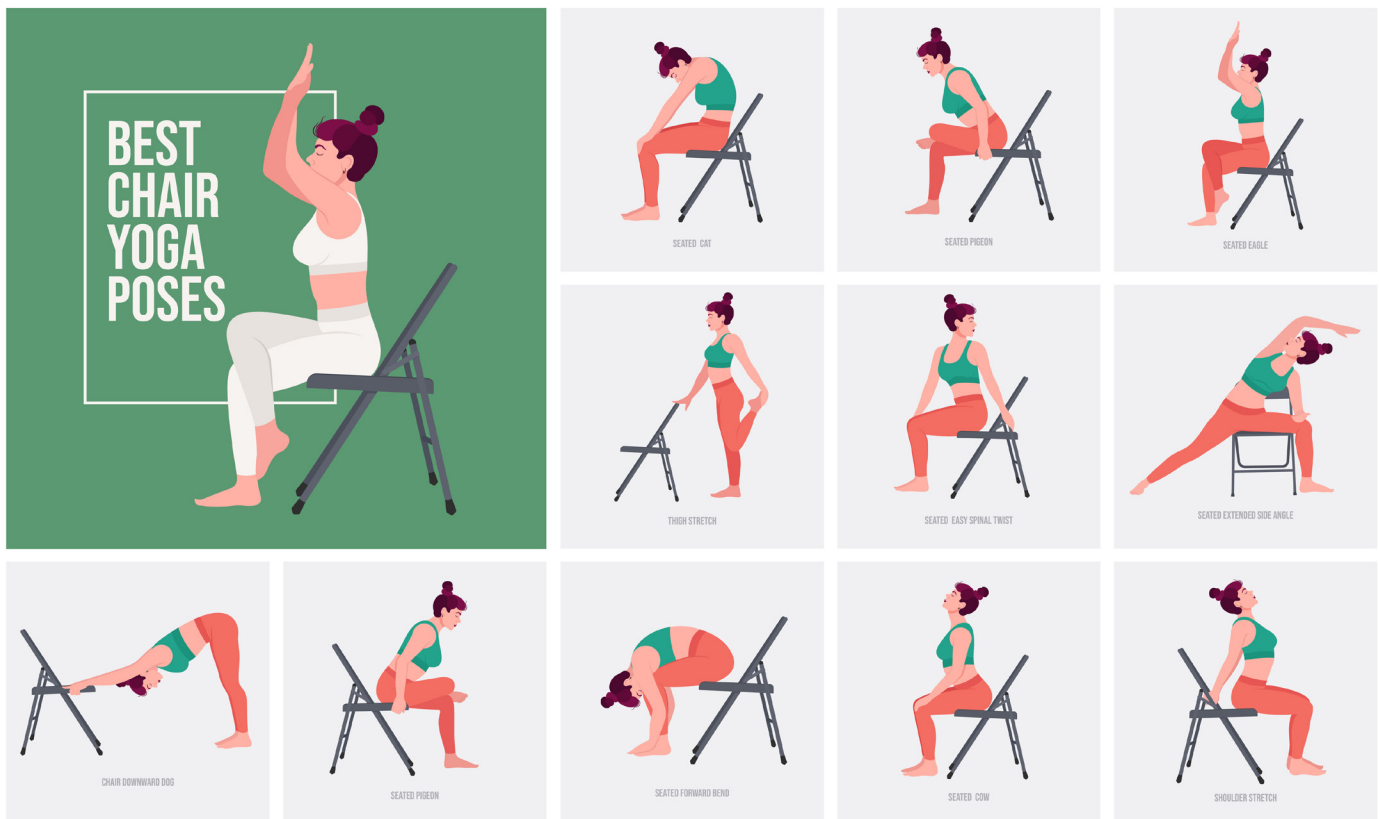
setup will be an encouraging reminder every day. When you're ready to begin, you can use your smartphone to play soft music or use a guided yoga class. Many are offered free on YouTube.

When you feel relaxed and balanced, daily interactions with your loved one can become more of a *partnership in care* rather than an overwhelming job or a burden. Your commitment to a peaceful, daily yoga practice can help guide your daily thoughts about your care partnership.

With a little perspective, your experience doesn't have to feel so all encompassing.

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

ACTIVITY CORNER



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**.

THE DOORWAY EFFECT – WHY WE FORGET WHY WE’VE WALKED INTO A ROOM



Have you ever walked into a room and suddenly forgotten why?

Research done at the University of Notre Dame, published in 2011 in the [Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology](#) showed that memory is often affected when we pass through a doorway. This is known as the *Doorway Effect*.

The author of this original research, Dr. Gabriel Radvansky suggests that our brain manages the continuous flow of information by breaking up experiences into small, more meaningful blocks of information called *mental event models*.

When we move from one situation to another – or even from one room to another – our brain updates to a new network of information, or a new *mental event model* that does not include information from the previous one.

So, as we switch gears, we may forget things from the previous event. This can occur whether we leave or enter a room, switch computer tabs, or work to refocus after an interruption.

The good news is that this shows that our brain is working as it should, adapting to the continuous flow of information and compartmentalizing properly. Dr. Radvansky suggests that in most cases, the process is helpful because this shifting of our mind from one event to the other, and forgetting what happened before is our brain’s way of *clearing the slate* – making way for new information. However annoying, it facilitates focus and accuracy by preventing us from perseverating on thoughts that are not relevant to the current moment.

How you can compensate for the doorway effect

The study suggests there are ways to create a connection between one mental event model and the next to help you to recall your original objective.

- ***Carry a reminder into the next room:*** For example, if you want to hang a picture and you need to get a hammer, take a picture hook with you when you go to the toolbox. The picture hook in your hand will remind you of what you need when you get there.
- ***Start again:*** Returning to the room where the original thought was established will return you to the previous mental event model. If it doesn’t come to you immediately, look around the room, or return to the spot where the thought was initiated. Something in that spot may jog your memory and help you retrieve the information. Even simply thinking about where you were when you first thought about it can be effective as well.

A few more tips to add

When it comes to attention and memory, there are two golden rules that will always serve you well.

- ***Single tasking (by avoiding multitasking):*** Focus on a single task. This makes you more likely to stay focused and see it through to the end with high quality results, and without forgetting anything important, even with minor interruptions.
- ***Performing tasks mindfully:*** If you’re watching a movie and you want a snack, but you forget why you’ve walked into the kitchen, you may need a strategy to help you be more mindful.

Next time, as you walk into the kitchen, say aloud, “I’m going into the kitchen for a snack.” (Do this even if you’re alone – no one will hear you anyway.) The act of saying that phrase aloud as you’re walking to the kitchen will connect the memory of your objective from one mental event model (from the TV room) to the next one (to the kitchen).

The ability to create separate networks and compartmentalize is just one aspect of normal function that makes our brain so spectacular. The ability to rapidly determine what information is relevant and what is not is the key to peak performance as the brain simply cannot process and remember everything.

When Your Loved One is Making Poor Decisions

As of late, has your loved one been making questionable decisions that you feel are uncharacteristic? Have these decisions been so out of character that you suspect there might be a change in the quality of their overall judgment?

Decision-making is defined as *thinking through a scenario and making the right choice can be complex*. Proper decision making requires a person to be able to measure potential possibilities and consider all possible outcomes. This can be complicated for anyone, but for someone with an aging brain, it can become even more difficult.

Decline of a person's ability to make well thought out decisions is a hallmark of aging. That's because most aspects of decision-making skills come from *the frontal lobe of the brain*, an area that is the last to develop (about age 25 – 28) and the first to start gradually diminishing (beginning at about the age of 60).

In some cases, poor judgment can also precede memory loss as a sign of a memory disorder like Alzheimer's disease, or another type of dementia. Keep in mind, *labeling your loved one as having poor judgment and worrying it could be associated with a memory disorder should not be based upon one single inappropriate decision*. Rather, it should be a result of a pattern of poor decisions or actions.

The following are examples of poor judgment associated with a memory disorder:

- **Your loved one does not recognize danger or ignores risks to their health and safety.** Even after being reminded of the danger of a fall, your loved one frequently uses a ladder to reach high shelves, ignores their doctor's recommendation to refrain from eating certain foods, or goes outside to walk to the mailbox on an icy day.
- **Your loved one repeatedly purchases unnecessary items from infomercials, emails or cold calls, or falls for phony prize offers and scams.** You've told your loved one to be wary when they are contacted by someone asking for money, credit card numbers or other personal information, but they continue to offer the information anyway. You've tried explaining that they need their money to pay for groceries and medications, but they continually purchase items they don't need. You've even put post-it notes in their checkbook and on their credit card – but they're still insisting that these calls are legitimate, despite your warnings and reminders.

- **Your loved one's social skills have changed.** Perhaps your loved one has always been friendly and outgoing, but as of late, they've taken friendliness to a new level. They seem to have lost their filter to the extent that you are worried about what they may say in public. They may directly insult someone about a new haircut or choice of clothing, or make a negative comment too loudly in a public place. They may also make a scene if they believe someone has stepped in front of them on the supermarket check-out line or offer a strongly worded, unsolicited opinion to a stranger.
- **They continue to drive, despite having had recent accidents.** Driving is always a touchy subject with seniors because it is often perceived as a direct attack to their independence. But if your loved one has been demonstrating a pattern of questionable judgment, getting behind the wheel of a car can be particularly dangerous to themselves and others. Driving requires high level perceptual skills and response time. Your loved one should certainly not be driving if they are having difficulty judging the distance between their own car and other cars on the road, or they can't discern how fast they're driving.
- If you're not certain if your loved one should be driving, many hospitals employ **driving evaluation specialists** who can objectively evaluate your loved one's fitness for getting behind the wheel. An evaluation like this can give you peace of mind, no matter the results. Furthermore, if their keys do need to be removed, you won't have to be the one to break the news.
- **You notice a change in your loved one's ability to perform proper hygiene, grooming and dressing.** If you notice your loved one is no longer spending time each morning properly washing, grooming, and dressing for the day (and if this is something they routinely have been able to do on their own every), it's time to talk to their physician. This is particularly true if your loved one is dressing in clothing that is inappropriate for the season.

It can be worrisome to see your loved one demonstrate signs of poor judgment. In most cases, there are reasons for this behavior that they cannot control. When this happens, talk to their primary care physician to determine what's causing this change in judgment. Some reasons for cognitive impairment are reversible and, in that case, it's important to determine if there are treatment options available.