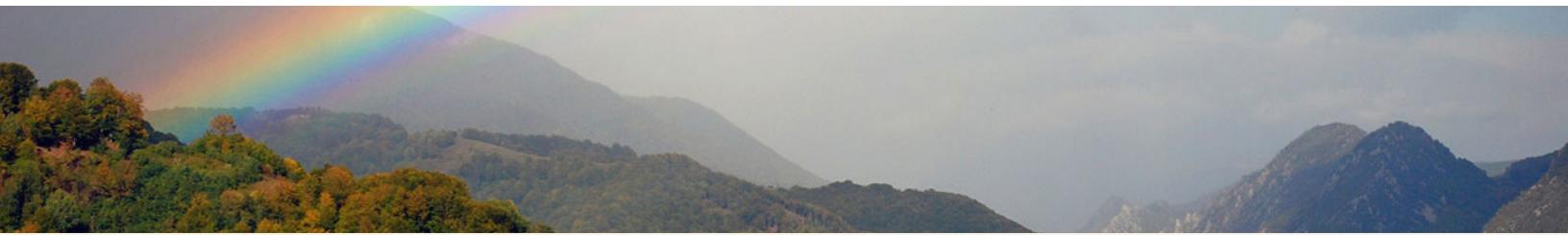


March 2024

# The Empowered Care Partner



## Together With You on Your Ceresti-Care Partner Journey



### FEATURED ARTICLE

## Marching On: Practical Strategies for Family Caregivers

As we move through the month of March, let's dive into the real-world aspects of caregiving, with concrete strategies to navigate the March madness and come out stronger on the other side.

### ***Facing March Head-On***

March has a way of throwing curveballs at caregivers. Between seasonal transitions, fluctuating weather, and the usual caregiving responsibilities, finding balance can be tough. But finding and having a sense of balance doesn't mean you have to do it all and be a superhero. It's about setting realistic expectations.

Acknowledge that there's only so much one person can handle. Share some of those responsibilities with other family members, even if it means letting go of some control. It might be helpful to create a calendar that outlines everyone's responsibilities and stick to it. This way, you're not the only one keeping track of appointments, medication schedules, and daily tasks.

### ***Spring Cleaning for Caregivers***

Spring cleaning isn't just for the house; it's for your mental space too, so take a cue from the changing season and try decluttering your mind. Carve out time for yourself, even if it's just a few minutes. Engage in activities that make you forget your worries – such as reading, exercising, or binge-watching a show.

Don't shy away from seeking help. It's not a sign of weakness; it's a sign of practicality. If someone offers to assist, take them up on it. Whether it's running errands or spending time with your loved one so you can have a break, accept the support. You'll be surprised how much it can lighten the load you're carrying.

### ***Marching Orders***

March can be unpredictable, just like caregiving. But planning ahead can give you a semblance of control. Start by looking at the month's calendar. Highlight important dates and appointments. If possible, have backup plans in case of emergencies. Knowing what's coming up can save you from last-minute panic.

Remember, it's not just about planning tasks; it's about planning for your own well-being too. Schedule time for relaxation or a hobby you enjoy. Treat these moments as non-negotiable appointments – because taking care of yourself is as crucial as taking care of your loved one.

### ***Growth through Adaptation***

March is a time of change, and as you probably know by now, family caregivers are pros at adapting. Embrace this flexibility in your caregiving journey. Just like the weather changes, so will your caregiving situation. Roles might shift, responsibilities might evolve, and unexpected challenges might arise.

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Rather than getting frustrated, view these changes as opportunities to grow. Talk to other caregivers who've been through similar situations. Their insights can be invaluable in navigating uncharted waters. Remember, you've already overcome so many obstacles – a new one just means you're adding another feather to your cap.

### **Gratitude in Every Step**

When life feels like a whirlwind, it's easy to miss the small victories that can happen throughout a busy day - but these are the ones that matter most. Celebrate each accomplishment, no matter how minor. Maybe you managed to squeeze in some self-care, or you successfully juggled caregiving with other responsibilities.

Keep a gratitude journal to jot down these wins. On tough days, flip through it and remind yourself of how far you've come. Gratitude doesn't have to be grand gestures; it's often found in the everyday moments that make up your caregiving journey.

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

### **Marching Strong**

March is a reminder that change is inevitable, but you've got what it takes to handle it all. By finding balance, decluttering stress, planning ahead, embracing adaptability, and celebrating small victories, you're not just surviving – you're thriving as a family caregiver.

Remember that here at Ceresti, you're equipped with all the practical tools, training, and support you'll need to tackle any caregiving challenge that comes your way.

### **March on, caregiver – you've got this!**

## BITE-SIZED TIPS FOR A BETTER BRAIN

### GOOD QUALITY SLEEP IS ESSENTIAL FOR YOUR BRAIN

Being a care partner can occasionally disrupt even the most serene person's sleep patterns. However, if these disturbances become more frequent, they can significantly impact your well-being and ability to function the following day.

Research shows that persistent sleep issues may increase the risk of developing serious health problems in the future, including memory disorders like Alzheimer's disease, and other forms of dementia. The good news is that adopting a consistent sleep routine that improves the quality of your sleep, even by just an extra hour each night, can reduce the risk of memory disorders by up to 30%.

#### **To optimize your sleep, the National Sleep Foundation recommends the following guidelines:**

Embrace pro-sleep habits during the day. To accomplish this, seek some morning sunlight and take short breaks outside if possible. Engage in regular exercise, avoiding vigorous activity within 4 hours of your bedtime. In the evening, opt for lighter meals that won't cause bloating or discomfort. Address any pain or discomfort before beginning your pre-bedtime routine.

Establish a calming pre-bedtime routine. Develop relaxing nightly rituals that help you unwind. Consider indulging in a warm bath or savoring a cup of chamomile tea at the same time every night. Wind down by reading a lighthearted book under a soft lamp while wearing comfortable nightclothes. Steer clear of screens, like TVs, computers, smartphones, and tablets, at least 3 hours before going to bed.

Create an environment that's conducive to a good night's sleep. Start by ensuring your bedroom is cool, dark, and quiet. Remove work-related or stress-inducing items, such as clutter, computers, or papers. If pets tend to disturb your sleep, consider relocating them to another room.

Set a sleep schedule with consistent bedtime and wake time, even on weekends. Some smartphones have a "bedtime setting" that can remind you when it's time to sleep and wake you up gently with soothing morning alarm sounds.

Remember, making small adjustments to your lifestyle, especially those within your control, can significantly impact your risk of developing health issues, including memory disorders. These changes will improve your overall health and alertness and contribute to a happier and more fulfilled life.

### PRIORITIZING CAREGIVER HEALTH FOR THE WELLBEING OF ALL

As family caregivers, the selfless act of tending to the needs of your loved one comes naturally.

You pour your heart and energy into ensuring their comfort, health, and happiness. However, there's one crucial aspect that often takes a backseat – your own health and well-being. It's time to recognize that prioritizing your own health is not just a personal choice, but an essential step toward maintaining the strength and resilience needed to provide quality care to your loved one.

Caring for a loved one is a demanding role that requires physical, emotional, and mental stamina. Neglecting your own health can lead to burnout, exhaustion, and even long-term health issues. Just as you attend to your loved one's medical appointments and well-being, it's equally crucial to schedule regular check-ups and screenings for yourself. By taking care of your health, you'll be better equipped to meet the challenges of caregiving head-on.

When you invest time in activities that promote your own well-being – be it exercise, a balanced diet, social interactions, or hobbies you enjoy – you're indirectly nurturing your ability to provide care. Physical activity not only enhances your physical health but also releases endorphins that boost your mood and reduce stress. Engaging in social activities prevents isolation and fosters a sense of community support. By maintaining your interests and hobbies, you ensure that you have a constructive outlet for your own stress and emotions.

Equally important is recognizing the signs of caregiver burnout. Feelings of chronic fatigue, irritability, and a sense of hopelessness are indicators that you're stretching yourself thin. Just as you would notice changes in your loved one's behavior, you should be attuned to your own emotional fluctuations. Seeking respite care, involving other family members, or even seeking professional help are valid steps to prevent burnout.

Moreover, your well-being sets an example for those under your care. When you prioritize your health, you teach your loved ones the importance of self-care. It creates an environment where open conversations about health are encouraged and where seeking assistance is viewed as a strength, not a weakness.

In the journey of family caregiving, it's essential to remember that you cannot pour from an empty cup. By nurturing your own health, you ensure that you have the energy, patience, and compassion to offer the best care possible. Your well-being is not a luxury but a necessity – a vital link that binds you to your role as a family caregiver and as an individual deserving of care.

Remember, dedicating yourself to the well-being of your loved one is your top priority. However, it's imperative to recognize that this commitment extends to yourself as well. Your health is the foundation upon which you build your caregiving journey. By valuing your own well-being, you secure a brighter and healthier future for both your loved ones and yourself.

## Reducing Dementia Risk through a Strong Social Circle

In the world of caregiving, there's one thing that stands out as a powerful defense against future challenges: maintaining a robust social circle. As you dedicate time and energy to caring for your loved one, it's crucial to remember that your well-being matters just as much. Recent research has revealed an important connection between social engagement and a reduced risk of developing dementia in the future.

Caring for a family member is a labor of love, but it can sometimes lead to isolation - which comes at a cost to your cognitive health. Studies have shown that individuals with strong social connections exhibit a lower risk of cognitive decline and dementia. The reasons behind this connection are multifaceted.

Firstly, engaging in regular social interactions stimulates the brain. Conversations, debates, and shared activities challenge your cognitive abilities and keep your mind sharp. Moreover, the emotional support derived from these interactions can alleviate stress—a known contributor to cognitive decline.

Secondly, your social circle can inspire healthier lifestyle choices. Engaging with friends often involves physical activities, be it a leisurely walk, a dance class, or a game of tennis. These activities not only keep you physically fit but also promote brain health.

Lastly, social connections act as a buffer against loneliness and depression. Chronic loneliness has been linked to increased risks of dementia. Having a support system you can rely on combats feelings of isolation, bolstering your emotional well-being.

So, as you navigate the intricacies of caregiving, remember to nurture your social connections. Reach out to friends, join clubs or support groups, and embrace activities that allow you to connect with others. By doing so, you're not only enriching your life today but also investing in your cognitive health for tomorrow.

In the grand mosaic of caregiving, remember that your well-being is a vital piece. Strengthening your social circle is a small yet impactful step you can take to safeguard your future cognitive health. Embrace the power of connection, and let it be your shield against the challenges that lie ahead.



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For further information on brain-healthy habits, visit the **Ceresti Brain Health Education Portal** at [brainhealth.ceresti.com](https://brainhealth.ceresti.com) and click on the **PREVENTION** tab at the top. First-time visitors, use the code **GIVECARE** during registration.

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