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The Empowered Caregiver



Together With You on Your Ceresti-Care Partner Journey



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Caregiving Through the Holidays: How to Manage Stress and Find Joy

The holiday season is often described as *"the most wonderful time of the year,"* but for caregivers, it can be a season full of added stress, responsibilities, and emotional weight.

Balancing caregiving duties with the demands of holiday preparations, family expectations, and social gatherings can leave many caregivers feeling overwhelmed. However, with some planning and self-care, it is possible to navigate this busy time and even find moments of joy.

Understanding the Challenges

Caregiving is already a full-time responsibility, and the holiday season adds even more to an already full plate. Extra tasks like shopping, decorating, cooking, and attending events can create feelings of stress and exhaustion. Many caregivers also face emotional challenges, such as feelings of guilt if they can't make the holidays "perfect" for their loved ones, or sadness if their loved one's health has declined.

On top of this, there can be pressure from extended family and friends to attend gatherings or participate in traditions that may not align with your loved one's current needs. This balancing act

can lead to burnout if caregivers don't take steps to protect their own well-being.

Practical Tips for Holiday Caregiving

- 1. Set Realistic Expectations:** It's important to accept that things may not look the same as they used to, and that's okay. Simplify where you can—whether it's scaling down holiday meals, limiting decorations, or skipping certain events. Discuss with family members what is truly important and focus on those moments rather than trying to do it all.
- 2. Delegate Tasks:** Don't hesitate to ask for help. Family members and friends may want to contribute but are unsure how. Be specific in your requests—whether it's helping with shopping, cooking, or giving you a break from caregiving duties for a few hours.
- 3. Prioritize Self-Care:** Caregivers often put their own needs last, but this is when self-care becomes even more crucial. Set aside time for yourself each day, even if it's just a short walk, a moment of quiet with a cup of tea, or time to read. Taking care of your mental and physical health will help you stay grounded and avoid burnout.
- 4. Incorporate Your Loved One:** Find ways to

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include the person you're caring for in holiday traditions. Whether it's watching a favorite holiday movie, listening to festive music, or decorating together, small moments can create a sense of togetherness and keep the season special for both of you.

- 5. Let Go of Guilt:** Many caregivers feel guilty when they can't do it all. Remember that your best is enough. The holidays don't have to be perfect to be meaningful. Focus on what truly matters: spending time with your loved ones and creating moments of joy, however small they may be.

Finding Joy in the Season

While the holidays can be challenging, they can also offer opportunities for connection and reflection. Simplifying your approach, asking for help, and setting boundaries can lighten the load. Most importantly, allow yourself to embrace the season in a way that works for you and your loved one. Remember, the holidays are about love, togetherness, and making memories—not perfection.

By prioritizing both your well-being and that of the person you care for, you can find moments of joy and peace, even amidst the holiday hustle.

By Marilyn Abrahamson, Brain Health Education Specialist at Ceresti Health

REDUCE YOUR RISKS

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 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 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.

For valuable tips on living a brain-healthier life and more insights about the brain, visit **Ceresti's Brain Health Education Portal** at brainhealth.ceresti.com. First-time users can register using the code **GIVECARE**.

If you'd like to continue receiving Ceresti newsletters either physically or digitally, please let us know by contacting newsletter@ceresti.com.

The Mediterranean and MIND Diets - A Brain Healthier Way of Eating

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.



Happy Holidays from Everyone at Ceresti

- Dirk Soenksen - Chief Operating Officer**
- Mark Wrenn - Chief Technology Officer**
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