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The Empowered Caregiver

Together With You on Your Ceresti Caregiver Journey



FEATURED ARTICLE

Caring for Your Brain: A Guide for Caregivers During Brain Awareness Month

June is *Brain Awareness Month*, a time dedicated to understanding the brain and the important role it plays in every aspect of our lives. As a caregiver, you likely focus much of your attention on the health and well-being of your loved one. *But have you stopped to consider your own brain health?* Taking care of your brain is just as important as caring for your body—especially when you are responsible for someone else's care.

The Importance of Brain Health

Your brain controls everything from memory and emotions to decision-making and problem-solving. When your brain is functioning well, you can better manage stress, stay organized, and provide high-quality care for your loved one. However, chronic stress, lack of sleep, and burnout—common among caregivers—can take a toll on cognitive function. By prioritizing brain health, you can protect your own well-being while also enhancing your ability to support your loved one.

Brain-Boosting Strategies for Caregivers

The good news is that small, daily habits can significantly improve brain health. Here are a few key strategies to keep in mind:

1. Stay Physically Active

Regular exercise increases blood flow to the brain, reduces stress, and improves mood. You don't need to spend hours at the gym—even a brisk 20-minute walk can provide benefits.

2. Eat a Brain-Healthy Diet

Your brain thrives on nutrients found in whole foods. Aim for a diet rich in leafy greens, berries, nuts, fish, and whole grains. These foods provide essential antioxidants and omega-3 fatty acids that support cognitive function.

3. Prioritize Sleep

Sleep is when the brain processes and stores information, clears toxins, and recharges. Lack of sleep can impair memory and decision-making. If caregiving responsibilities make sleep difficult, try setting a relaxing bedtime routine and asking for help when needed.

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4. Engage Your Mind

Just like physical exercise strengthens muscles, mental stimulation strengthens the brain. Try reading, playing word games, learning a new skill, or engaging in meaningful conversations.

5. Manage Stress

Chronic stress can damage brain cells and increase the risk of cognitive decline. Deep breathing, mindfulness, and taking short breaks throughout the day can help you manage stress more effectively.

How Ceresti Health Supports Caregivers

Caring for a loved one with dementia or another neurological condition can feel overwhelming, but you don't have to do it alone. At Ceresti Health, we specialize in supporting caregivers like you through our personalized, virtual coaching programs.

Our dedicated coaching staff provides guidance tailored to your unique situation, helping you navigate the challenges of caregiving while also prioritizing your own well-being. Our programs offer education, emotional support, and practical strategies to reduce stress, improve confidence, and enhance your caregiving skills—all from the comfort of your home.

Final Thoughts

This *Brain Awareness Month*, take a moment to reflect on how you can care for your brain. By adopting small but meaningful changes, you can boost your cognitive health, reduce stress, and enhance the care you provide to your loved one. And remember, you don't have to do it alone—*Ceresti Health* is here to support you every step of the way.

Written by Marilyn Abrahamson, Brain Health Education Specialist at Ceresti Health

BITE-SIZED TIPS FOR A BETTER BRAIN

BREATHE YOUR WAY TO FEELING CALM

Caregiving can be overwhelming, and it's easy to feel stressed or anxious. One simple and effective way to calm your mind is through controlled breathing. When you focus on your breath, it can help lower stress levels and clear your mind.

Here's a simple technique to try:

1. Sit comfortably with your back straight.
2. Close your eyes and take a deep breath in through your nose for a count of four.
3. Hold your breath for a count of four.
4. Slowly exhale through your mouth for a count of four.
5. Repeat this process for a few minutes.

This breathing exercise activates your body's relaxation response, helping to lower your heart rate and ease tension. It's an easy practice you can do anytime, anywhere, to feel calmer and more focused.

Taking a moment to breathe can also improve your ability to respond with patience and clarity, which is especially important in caregiving. Remember, it's okay to take a breath and care for your own well-being, too!

To learn more about brain-health and related topics, visit **Ceresti's Brain Health Education Portal** at brainhealth.ceresti.com. The first time you visit, register using the code **GIVECARE**.

Making Travel Easier for Caregivers and Loved Ones with Dementia

Written by Ashley Brunswick, Caregiver Coach at Ceresti Health.

With summer coming, you might be thinking about a trip but wondering if it's possible to travel with your loved one who has dementia. The good news is that travel can still be enjoyable with extra planning and realistic expectations.

Your loved one may feel confused when their routine or surroundings change. This might make it seem like their condition is getting worse, but this is normal and usually only temporary. With the right steps, you can help make travel less stressful for both of you.

A good way to start is by taking a short trip close to home. This can help you see how your loved one reacts to a new place. If they become very confused or upset, a longer trip might be too difficult.

When planning, choose the most comfortable way to travel. If flying, try to book direct flights to avoid long layovers. Call the airline ahead of time to let them know you are traveling with someone who has dementia. Many airlines offer help with security lines and boarding.

If staying in a hotel, tell the staff about your loved one's condition. Your loved one may wander or become disoriented in a new place, so having a plan in case this happens is important. Also, know where the closest medical center is in case of an emergency.

Make sure your loved one wears ID that cannot be easily removed. This will help if they become lost or confused.

Keep your schedule simple and allow for plenty of rest. Too many activities can be overwhelming. If possible, bring another person to help so you can take breaks too.

Traveling with your loved one with dementia takes extra effort, but it can still be a great way to create special memories. Things may not always go as planned, but staying patient and flexible will help. With good preparation, you and your loved one can have a safe and enjoyable trip.

Safe travels!



RECOGNIZING CHANGE

CHANGES IN PERSONAL HYGIENE: WHEN CARE NEEDS TO INCREASE

As loved ones with dementia or other neurological conditions progress, caregivers may notice changes in personal hygiene habits. These shifts can be subtle at first but may indicate that more assistance is needed. Understanding these changes is important in ensuring the well-being of the person you care for.

One common change is a decline in the ability to remember or recognize the need for personal care. For example, they may forget to bathe or brush their teeth, or they may resist personal care tasks. This can lead to poor hygiene, which may cause discomfort, skin irritation, or even infections.

Physical changes, like decreased mobility or difficulty with coordination, can also impact personal hygiene. A person who once managed these tasks independently may now struggle with reaching, bending, or maintaining balance during bathing or grooming. In such cases, additional support may be necessary to prevent accidents or injuries.

When these signs appear, it's important to approach the situation with patience and understanding. Offering gentle reminders, using simple instructions, and providing hands-on assistance can help. In some cases, professional help may be needed to ensure proper care and hygiene.

If you're uncertain about how to manage these changes or need extra guidance, it's important to contact your coach at Ceresti Health for support. They can provide tailored advice and resources to assist you in making these adjustments, ensuring your loved one receives the care and support they need. Recognizing when to step in and increase care is crucial. By addressing these needs early, caregivers can help maintain the dignity and health of their loved ones while ensuring they feel supported and comfortable.

FAST FACTS FOR CAREGIVERS

Simple Ways to Improve Your Loved One's Sleep

Ensuring a good night's sleep for a loved one with dementia or other neurological conditions can be challenging. Poor sleep can affect their mood, cognition, and overall well-being. This can adversely affect the quality of your sleep as well.

Here are some simple strategies to help improve their sleep:

- 1. Establish a Routine:** A consistent bedtime routine helps signal to the brain that it's time to wind down. Try to keep the same sleep and wake times every day.
- 2. Create a Calm Environment:** Make sure the bedroom is quiet, cool, and dark. Consider using soft lighting or a nightlight if they feel anxious in the dark.
- 3. Limit Caffeine and Sugary Drinks:** Avoid giving your loved one caffeinated beverages or sugary snacks in the hours leading up to bedtime. These can interfere with sleep.
- 4. Encourage Daytime Activity:** Gentle physical activity during the day, such as a short walk or light stretching, can help promote better sleep at night.
- 5. Monitor Naps:** While short naps can be beneficial, long or late-afternoon naps may make it harder for your loved one to fall asleep at night.

By implementing these simple changes, you can help your loved one sleep more soundly and feel more rested. Always consult with their healthcare provider if sleep issues persist.