



HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

To Winter

by Claude McKay

Stay, season of calm love and soulful snows!

There is a subtle sweetness in the sun,
The ripples on the stream's breast gaily run,
The wind more boisterously by me blows,
And each succeeding day now longer grows.
The birds a gladder music have begun,
The squirrel, full of mischief and fun,
From maples' topmost branch the brown twig throws.
I read these pregnant signs, know what they mean:
I know that thou art making ready to go.
Oh stay! I fled a land where fields are green
Anyways, and palms wave gently to and fro,
And winds are balmy, blue brooks never sheen,
To ease my heart of it's impassioned woe.

EMPOWERING CAREGIVERS

This newsletter is to help caregivers who are caring for loved ones who are participating in the

December 2009

Family Caregiver Support Program. This newsletter will be sent monthly, to cover a variety of health and care giving topics. If you have any suggestions for topics, comments or questions about the newsletter please email us at caremanagement@ursulineseniors.org.



*In seed time learn,
in harvest teach,
in winter enjoy.*

William Blake

5 Easy Ways to Give Your Home Some Holiday Spirit

For many of us, there is not much time left at the end of a busy day to do anything; much less decorate for the holiday! With a few simple touches, you can transform your home into a warm and festive atmosphere.

1. Decorate with Bows

- Bows are a festive touch without a lot of fuss. Tie the ribbon pattern you use in with the rest of your décor.
- You can attach bows to anything – chair backs, stair railings, basket handles and doorknobs.
- You don't have to stick with traditional colors.
- Choose a ribbon type that you can tie and un-tie each year. This makes storing them simpler as a bow is easily crushed. You will save money and can add to your collection year after year.

2. Hang holiday wreaths or swags

- To keep wreaths year after year, buy artificial but remember you need space to store them!
- Real wreaths and swags can add that wonderful pine scent even if you are not using a tree in your home.

3. Use holiday ornaments in decorating

- If you are not planning on using a tree this year, you can still use your beloved ornaments to decorate your home.
- Place shiny ornaments in a clear glass bowl to add holiday sparkle
- Embellish indoor plants with ornaments

4. Holiday music adds a festive air to any home

5. Sprinkle artificial snow across a buffet or tabletop or in house plants

By keeping things simple, you'll find that you have more time to enjoy the season and your friends and family.

Adapted from Coral Nafie, About.com

Take Time This Season to Give a Gift To Yourself

For many, it may seem silly or extravagant to pamper oneself. For some, they simply feel they don't have time to do it. During the holiday season, everyone is rushing around trying to accomplish every little task for the upcoming festivities. For caregivers, this season means stress multiplied. The task of care giving is demanding in itself.

Please, take some time out to take care of you. The simple truth is that if you don't do it – who will?

Here are a few ideas...

- * Read a book
- * Take a bubble bath (or a shower with some aromatherapy products)
- * Take a walk in a public garden or nursery
- * Take a weekend away (if possible)
- * Catch a matinee or watch a movie at home that you've wanted to see (even if no one else in your family does)
- * Drink a cup of coffee or tea
- * A special scented lotion you love
- * Light a scented candle
- * Go out on the porch, wrapped up in a blanket and look at the stars
- * Put a heating pad on the bed to warm it up before you get in it
- * Put your clothes in the dryer in the morning before you get dressed so they'll be warm
- * Have a "tea party" by cutting up snack cakes and serving them on the fine china
- * Do a crossword puzzle, a word search or play solitaire
- * Listen to beautiful music
- * Place fresh flowers in your home

How many more ideas can you come up with? Some of the ideas may seem silly but the idea is to pamper yourself, in whatever way will work for you.

Many ideas provided from readers of Flylady.net – a site that provides help for home organization, one baby step at a time.

Advocacy Corner

Americans Giving care to Elders (AGE) Act (2009)

Bill would provide \$12 million over 4 years for the establishment of a National Resource Center on Family Caregiving, which would identify and develop "best practices," provide information on caregiver policies and programs, convene educational programs and web-based seminars, and provide a website with a national database of caregiver programs and resources. The bill would also provide a tax credit of up to \$1200 for eldercare expenses and increase funding for the National Family Caregiver Support Program (NFCSP).

Bill Number S.1604

Sponsor Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-MN)/ Sen. Barbara Mikulski (D-MD)

Date of Introduction 8/6/2009

Latest Activity Referred to Senate Finance Committee

More Info <http://thomas.loc.gov/>

Topic: Caregiver Tax Incentives

The Importance of Self-Care to Caregivers

There are approximately 44 million unpaid caregivers, age 18 or older, living in America today. The value of unpaid caregiving totals about \$148– \$188 billion dollars annually (and rises every year). Caregivers have many roles in addition to the primary role (daughter, son, spouse); they serve as a hands-on health provider, care manager, friend, companion, surrogate decision-maker, and advocate. Most caregivers come into this role unprepared and provide care with little or no support but manage to excel in this role regardless.

Research shows that caregivers, in general are less likely to engage in preventative health measures such as going to a doctor when they should. Caregivers also have a higher amount of stress (which can contribute to health concerns). The common sources of stress are trying to meet care receivers and their own expectations, inability to set appropriate boundaries, mental and physical demands, time pressures, limited resources, and competing priorities. 40 to 70 % of caregivers have clinically significant symptoms of depression.

All of this hinders the caregivers ability to provide care and can lead to a poor quality of life for both the caregiver and care receiver.

Caregivers frequently experience emotions such as frustration/anger, feeling drained or guilty, helplessness, loss of self-identity, worry and uncertainty. In general caregivers feel less self-acceptance, feel less effective and feel less in control of their lives than non-caregiving peers. There can be physical strains and cognitive strains as well. Caregivers may experience confusion, difficulty making decisions, decreased problem solving and decreased concentration due to the stress.

How to combat these effects? Self-care. It is critical that caregivers pace themselves, know their limitations and set appropriate boundaries. Self-care should involve all parts of the person: physical, mental, spiritual, emotional and social. The Sanford Center for Aging recommends a F.A.M.I.L.Y. approach:

- F— Fitness Strategies (ability to stay fit)
- A—Adaptability (ability to adapt to varying demands)
- M—Moving through Loss (recognizing and moving through loss)
- I—Independence (dependency to independence to interdependence)
- L—Longevity (meeting basic needs and living longer)
- Y—Your Motivation (Identifying your motivation to improve health)

If a caregiver feels overwhelmed, unable to cope, helpless or even unable to return to a normal routine then caregivers should seek support, delegate where needed and reach out to others in the same position.

In Cheryl Richardson's book, [The Art of Extreme Self-Care](#), she states that whenever a caregiver is feeling frustrated, burdened or resentful ask yourself:

Where do I feel deprived?

What do I need more of right now?

What do I need less of?

What do I want right now?

What am I yearning for?

Who or what is causing me to feel resentful and why?

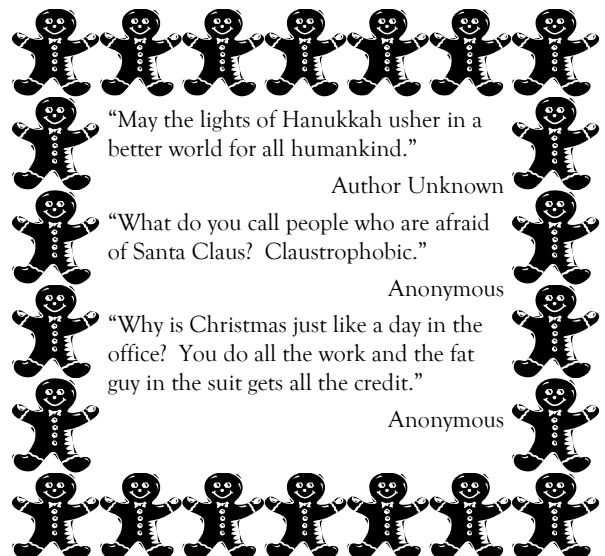
What am I starving for?

The answers may take some time to come to you, but will help you to take the next steps to feeling better.

The good news is that caregiving does have its rewards. Those caregivers who learn the art of self-care gain much from the experience. Caregivers feel an overall heightened sense of self-worth, feelings of competence and pride in ability to meet challenges. There is a greater feeling of spiritual connection and enhanced sense of purpose among caregivers. There is also the knowledge that your loved one is receiving quality care and love and that you as a caregiver are appreciated.

References:

Cheryl Richardson, [The Art of Extreme Self-Care](#)
 Sanford Center on Aging, University of Nevada, Reno, NV
 Nevada Geriatric Education Center



Local Events

Timeout for Caregivers

Immanuel Lutheran Church offers a free lunch program and a timeout for caregivers from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. on the second and fourth Wednesday each month. Call (412) 271-1995 for more information.

Immanuel Lutheran Church
420 Fifth Street, Braddock, PA

AARP Driver Safety Program

Various UPMC facilities

Offered several times per year, call for information

Cost: \$10

To register: 800-533-UPMC (8762)

Description: A two session driver refresher course for motorists ages 55 and older. This course is presented in conjunction with the AARP. Individuals who complete the course are eligible for a five to ten percent reduction on auto insurance premiums.

Depression Screenings

Offered several times per year, call for information

Cost: Free

Location: Western Psychiatric Institute & Clinic
3811 O'Hara Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15213

To Register: 412-246-6111

Description: This program, provided by the Mood Disorders Treatment Research Program, offers a free telephone assessment for adults with depression.

Highmark Senior Products—Informational Seminar

Date: Monday, December 28, 2009

Time: 11 a.m. And 1 p.m.

Sponsor/Location: Destination Wellness, 556 Pittsburgh Mills Circle, Tarentum, PA 15084

Highlights: Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield offers a variety of health plans for individuals with Medicare. Their Medicare Solutions Expert can help you find the right plan to fit your needs. Call to reserve your space at 724-274-5202.



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