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ELDERCARE RESOURCE SERVICES



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"HELPING YOU HELP YOUR LOVED ONES"

NOVEMBER 2016
A FREE PUBLICATION ON ELDER ISSUES
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HOLIDAY GIFTS

The holiday season is upon us and everyone is focused on spending time with family and on bringing gifts.

Buying gifts for a family member who has everything can be quite a challenge.

Our recommendation on gift giving is to make it personal or useful.

One idea is a family calendar. On the day of the month that someone celebrates a birthday or anniversary, enter that family member's birthday on the day. Or you can make a family calendar and each month is a picture of another family member.

Many people still send their bills via US Postal mail and many people may write letters to grandchildren. A book of stamps and stationary is always very useful.

For someone who enjoyed cooking, purchase a magazine subscription that has many recipes. Even if the recipes are not made, looking at the pictures can bring enjoyment and pleasure. For someone who enjoys sports then purchase a subscription to a sports magazine.

A gift card to the local grocery store is always a treat. Other gift cards can be to a local restaurant and along with it is transportation for your relative and friend. Make arrangements using a taxi or car service. This way the gift card gets used.

Purchase a family history book and ask your relative to write down information about their family, their parents and if they remember their grandparents. This is a nice memory to hand down to the next generation. Sit

down and audio record answers about family members so there is an oral family history.

Consider purchasing a cleaning service and telling your relative they have one free cleaning service on the day of their choice. Another service that can be brought in is someone to cook a meal once or on a regular basis. When it is a gift sometimes it is hard to turn it down.

For someone that lives in a cold weather area consider purchasing new winter gloves, scarf, and a hat. Maybe you can also purchase new boots. Many people are cold and if these items can be found that provide extra warmth it will help your relative tolerate the cold when they need to go outside.

MAKE HAPPY MEMORIES

The holiday season is always stressful. Families are pulled in many directions trying to please their children, husband, and parent.

Think about what is most important and focus on that. Prioritize what is important and what is not as important.

For example, if spending time with a family member is important, make it happen.

Make happy memories when together; take pictures, reminisce, ask questions about their childhood etc. Live in the moment and enjoy the time together. Then when you look back you can recall with a smile what a good time it was.

Getting to that personal goal may mean delegating some things or not doing other things. Focus on what got

done and not on what did not get done.

The holidays are stressful and any way you can carve out time for something you want and make it happen is very good. This is good for both the mind and the body. The holiday season is busy with a lot happening—remember to take care of you.

ABOUT US

ElderCare Resource Services is a certified aging care management company co-owned by Linda Sullivan RN, CMC, and Debbie Gitner LCSW, C-SWCM. Our unique Nurse/Social Worker team is able to provide both psychosocial and medical consultation to our clients. Linda and Debbie work together on each case. Families can consult with either of us. We are strong advocates for our clients giving them information to make them better consumers; getting their relative the best care. Together we are able to assist our clients and their families with information on Community Services, Home Care, Assisted Living, and Nursing Homes. Linda and Debbie have over 35 years working with the geriatric population. Now is the time to plan for the future. Call us if you have a question about our services. We'll be happy to chat. Look for our monthly column in the Metro West News ['Senior Questions and Answers'](#)



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HOW TO TRAVEL WITH AN AGING PARENT

Traveling with an aging relative can be stressful. Sometimes it is important to take a relative to a family function or on a small mini vacation or to see great grandchildren at a distance.

Before the trip take the time to plan every aspect of the trip. Decide if the trip will be by car or by plane. If flying contact the airline to discuss your relative's needs. When you get to the airport if help is needed go up to the desk and ask for escort service.

Bring with you their I.D. along with several copies in case the original gets lost. Also make copies of their insurance cards and bring them along on the trip.

Talk with their primary care physician about their medications. Bring a list of medications and the time each medication is taken. Ask the MD what are the consequences if

a medication is forgotten or taken later.

Consider shipping a box of clothing and other personal items to the destination ahead of time. Even if driving it takes time to load and unload the car and items can be forgotten. If clothing and other items are sent ahead of time when you are ready to leave it is the most important items; I.D., medications, insurance cards, food, etc. that go.

Medications: if a relative orders meds on line and there are not enough for the trip then ask the physician to order a 30 day refill to the local pharmacy.

Remember move slowly, do not rush anyone, plan bathroom stops, plan stretching time, and plan food breaks.

Bring a camera to take pictures of the time together.

When you arrive at the destination know your relative will be tired. Schedule nap or relaxation time. Also the day after the trip it is not unusual for someone to feel

a bit more tired being out of their element.

If a relative needs help with personal care then talk with the local family member or friend about hiring help through an agency. If your relative receives help through an agency in their home then ask if that agency is part of a national chain that provides services in the new destination.

As a caregiver take a deep breath often, close your eyes if the stress becomes too much and find a way to relax.

When a senior is outside their comfort zone it is not unusual for someone to feel a bit more anxious or nervous and become a bit more demanding. Reassurance and hugs go a very long way.

Remember you can always plan so much and then you need to go by the "seat of your pants".

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: My sister's health was good for the past two years. Then she had a small stroke and as a result of that she is now having trouble swallowing and walking. She has had a major change in her health so quickly. Will she return to her previous level? I fear she will not.

A: It is difficult to answer that question and sometimes doctors have difficulty with that question. Many people make a quick recovery while other people continue to make small recoveries and never quite get back to their previous lifestyle. Your sister has both swallowing and walking as two big challenges. Continue therapy for as long as possible and remember with a stroke gains can continue to be made up to one year after the stroke.

Q: My aunt has many delusional thoughts. She hears voices and

believes people are talking to her telling her what to do. She is not on any medications. Her physical health is good but I worry about her mental health. I have mentioned it to my aunt's doctor and he is not concerned. Should I be doing more or find another doctor?

A: If the voices have been going on for years (and in many situations it has been going on since your aunt was in her 20's) then this is your aunt's norm. Ask your aunt if the voices bother her and does she want them to go away. If the voices do not instruct your aunt to do things like go outside in the cold without a coat or tell her to harm herself then taking away the voices your aunt has been hearing for years could cause more harm. You could arrange a consultation with a geriatric psychiatrist who maybe

able to answer more of your questions.

Q: My parents still live in their own home. My mother is very stubborn and my father is forgetful. Together they do well because it is like one brain between them. I visit every day to check up on them. I bring them groceries and manage the bills and running of the house though they think they are able to manage everything. Both my parents refuse help in the house. I have argued and argued and they have declined. Any ideas?

A: Have a plan ready to go if either of them gets sick and goes to the hospital. . Sometimes all you can do is nothing until life changes and then make a change.