



Graceful Living
HOME CARE

The **Senior's Choice**
Connection

SUMMER 2009

www.GracefulLivingHomeCare.com

651-705-7212

**CAREGIVER
PROFILE**



Our caregivers are totally committed, highly qualified and carefully selected individuals who are personally and thoroughly screened, bonded and insured.

Most importantly our caregivers are dependable and extraordinarily caring of others. In addition to their previous experience, our caregivers receive continuous training that includes a specialized curriculum exclusive to The Senior's Choice that results in them becoming Certified Companion Aides™. These highly qualified and trained caregivers are ready to help you and your loved ones with a variety of daily activities such as:

- * Caring companionship
- * Meal planning and preparation
- * Incidental transportation
- * Running errands
- * Light housekeeping
- * Medication reminders
- * Assistance with bathing and grooming
- * Assistance with bill paying
- * Information and referral services

Our personalized and affordable services are available 7 days a week and can range from a few hours a day to 24 hour and live in care.

Welcome to the Summer '09
Senior's Choice Connection

Welcome to our Summer 2009 issue! We hope you enjoy these articles and find them helpful. First, it's my great pleasure to introduce you to our Summer Caregiver of the Season, **Kerry Cazzorla**.

Mix one part Energizer Bunny, one part Tin Woodman's heart, toss in party planner extraordinaire, whirl it around and around and what you'll get is our caregiver of the season, Kerry Cazzorla. Kerry wears her heart on her sleeve and understands intuitively the needs of her clients.

With Kerry, clients and family are one and the same. This past Christmas she invited her family to join her and several of her clients on a trip to the Assiniboine Park Conservatory. When there is a puzzle to solve, even Kerry's family gets involved! Anything from figuring out how a digital photo frame works to programming a cordless phone.

Just recently Kerry put on her party planning hat to arrange a birthday celebration for a client. After numerous phone calls she finally had everything arranged . . .

the limousine (Handi-Transit) and reservations at Club Regent for dinner. This same client misplaced his glasses on a recent trip to the hospital, and Kerry hustled about to do her best to locate them. One of the client's family members (who does not live in Winnipeg) said she feels so peaceful knowing Kerry is here to be her eyes and ears.

Another one of Kerry's clients, who is a mere 97 years old, gained the confidence to renovate her house—since she knows Kerry will be there for her. Kerry took the initiative to find her a contractor, and since then they have taken numerous trips to the hardware store to pick out products. Kerry is never content to just do her job—she always goes the extra mile.

Kerry, you are a gem and always a pleasure to work with!

Katherine Gregoire
President & CEO
Comforts of Home-Care

Best wishes,
Steve Everhart,

President & CEO,
The Senior's Choice



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SENIOR HEALTH & LIFESTYLES

Stress Relief & Relaxations

Stress is a fact of life. Although some stress is normal and even needed, too much of it can affect your quality of life and your health. There are simple things you can do to help relieve stress.

When you feel stressed, you can:

- Take slow, deep breaths.
- Soak in a warm bath.
- Listen to soothing music.
- Take a walk or do some other physical activity.
- Meditate or pray.
- Take a yoga class.
- Have a massage or back rub.
- Have a warm drink that doesn't have alcohol or caffeine.

You also can make some changes in your everyday habits to reduce and relieve stress.

- Get plenty of sleep.
- Stay connected to your family, friends, and other caring people in your life.
- Get regular exercise. It can help you clear your mind and work off feelings of frustration and anxiety.
- Don't drink or eat anything that has caffeine in it. Caffeine can make you feel "wound up" and more stressed.
- Don't smoke or use tobacco. Nicotine can make you feel more anxious.
- Don't drink alcohol. It can cause sleep problems and depression.

Muscle relaxation to relieve stress

Your body may respond to stress by tensing up, which can cause pain. If you learn to relax your muscles, you can reduce muscle tension and anxiety. Progressive muscle relaxation can help you do this.

In progressive muscle relaxation, you tense and then relax related groups of muscles. You can use a relaxation tape or CD to help you go through all the muscle groups. Or you can learn the muscle groups and work through them from memory. Find a quiet place where you won't be bothered. Be sure you can lie on your back in comfort.

For each muscle group:

- Breathe in and tense the muscle group for 4 to 10 seconds. Tense hard, but not to the point of cramping.
- Then breathe out while you suddenly and completely relax the muscle group. Don't relax it gradually.
- Rest for 10 to 20 seconds.

Here are the muscle groups:

Hands and arms

- Hands: Make a tight fist.
- Wrists and forearms: Tense them and bend your hands back at the wrist.
- Biceps and upper arms: Make your hands into fists, bend your arms at the elbows, and tense your biceps.
- Shoulders: Shrug them.

Head and neck

- Forehead: Wrinkle it into a deep frown.
- Around the eyes and bridge of the nose: Close your eyes as tightly as possible. If you wear contact lenses, remove them before beginning the exercise.
- Cheeks and jaws: Smile as widely as you can.

- Around the mouth: Press your lips together tightly.
- Back of the neck: Press your head back against the floor.
- Front of the neck: Touch your chin to your chest.

Upper body

- Chest: Take a deep breath and hold it, then breathe out.
- Back: Arch your back up from the floor.
- Stomach: Suck it into a tight knot.

Lower body

- Hips and rear end (buttocks): Press the buttocks together tightly.
- Thighs: Clench them hard.
- Lower legs: Push your heels out and flex your toes up, as if trying to bring the toes up to touch your shins. Then point your toes away and curl them downward.

You may feel sleepy after doing this exercise. To "wake up" your body, count backwards from 5 to 1. Then move your fingers, toes, hands and feet. Finally, stretch and move your entire body.

*Excerpted from webmd.com:
<http://www.webmd.com/balance/stress-management/tc/stress-relief-and-relaxation-overview>*



ROTATING TOPIC:

Pets Help the Elderly Live Longer, Healthier and Happier

There's no disputing animals have always had a positive impact on their owners' lives. Now, evidence suggests four-legged friends are a real health benefit for elderly people, helping them live longer, healthier and happier lives.

Pets Encourage Seniors to Stay Active

The general care associated with a pet can help seniors live more energetic lives. As any pet owner knows, animals need attention and keep us active—whether we want to be or not. Pets help seniors establish routines

and get them to do things they might not normally do, such as getting outside and walking their dog or changing their cat's litter box, feeding, grooming or playing with their pet.

Pets Make Great Companions for Seniors

Pets can give an elderly person a great sense of self and help increase self-esteem since pets need and rely on their owners for virtually every aspect of their care. Seniors also benefit from the unconditional love and affection their pets give them.

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Inflation Hits Hard When You Can Least Afford It

FINANCE & CONSUMER RESOURCES



A dollar doesn't go as far as it used to. That's true for all Americans, but the loss of purchasing power is especially insidious for Americans age 62 and older. This group lives between the proverbial rock and a hard place: Fixed incomes plus inflation that tends to run a bit faster than that for the general population. What can retirees and would-be retirees do to protect themselves? And what, if anything, can government do?

1. Tie COLA To CPI-E

Since 2000, the Social Security cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) has increased average benefits just 31 percent while typical senior expenses have risen more than 58 percent. According to the Senior Citizens League, a senior with the average Social Security benefit in 2000 received \$816 per month, a figure that rose to \$1072.30 by 2009. However, that senior would require a Social Security benefit of \$1,288.60 per month in 2009 just to maintain his or her 2000 lifestyle.

To help increase buying power, the Senior Citizens League is lobbying for a change in the index used to determine the Social Security COLA. By tying the

COLA to the consumer price index (CPI-E), seniors would see much needed relief in their monthly checks, the Senior Citizens League said in its release. One looming problem: The Congressional Budget Office is projecting no COLA increases from 2010 through 2012. And that, according to the Senior Citizens League, means seniors will likely fall even further behind as medical costs continue to climb as forecast.

2. Live Within Means

Ultimately, seniors living on fixed incomes need to worry less about indexes and focus more on their own consumption. The "average" person consumes a very different set of goods than what we find many people consume. In other words, it's important to create a budget now and stick with it.

3. Calculate Retirement Expenses

No matter whether you are retired or not, it's important to estimate as accurately as possible your expenses in retirement. You need to know what the different inflation rates are for the different types of goods and services that you will consume. And you need to

know how those goods and services will be consumed during the different retirement stages. For instance, it's likely that you will spend more on health care in the latter stages of retirement than in the early stages. And it's likely that you'll spend more on travel and entertainment in the early stages than later. Both of those expenditures have different inflation rates and both will represent a different percent of total expenditures over the course of one's retirement.

4. Invest Differently

One of the major risks in retirement is inflation, according to the Society of Actuaries. The best way to mitigate the effects of inflation, the SOA said, is to own some assets whose value may grow in times of inflation. Those include common stocks, inflation-indexed Treasury bonds, inflation-indexed annuities, and commodities and natural resources.

By Robert Powell

Excerpted from aarp.org:

http://www.aarp.org/yourmoney/socialsecurity/051909_inflation.html

(Stimulus, continued from page 2)

Just the very presence of a pet provides camaraderie to seniors, helping them realize they are not alone.

Additionally, having a pet—especially a dog—can give seniors a great sense of safety just by the barking which can keep unwanted visitors away.

Pets Help Our Hearts

Studies show that older pet-owning citizens have lower blood pressure and cholesterol levels than non-owners, helping to reduce their risk for heart disease and decrease their number of visits to the doctor. Additionally, a number of other studies suggest that pet owners have a better chance for long-term survival after surviving a coronary event than non-pet owners.

Pets Help the Elderly Overcome Depression and Loneliness

According to a study in the Journal of

the American Geriatrics Society, caring for a cat or dog helps elderly people overcome depression or loneliness. Whether that be from the loss of a loved one, not having family or friends nearby to interact with, or not being able to get out much, having a fluffy friend gives older citizens a sense of purpose since they have to take care of their pet and think about things other than their own problems.

Even for elderly patients in nursing homes, animal-assisted therapy has shown to help patients decrease their anxiety levels and give them something to look forward to.

Christina Miller, a former convalescent home activities director in Southport, N.C., says she witnessed the positive impact animals had on elderly patients when a local animal shelter made weekly visits to her facility. "Residents who normally weren't active were

suddenly getting up, petting and talking to the cats and dogs, smiling and interacting," she says. "Patients would ask me, 'Are the dogs here? Did they come yet?' Half the patients had better reactions to the dogs and cats than they did to people."

The positive impact animals have on people—especially the elderly—is tremendous. So much so that there are organizations such as the Pets for the Elderly Foundation, a non-profit organization, that specifically places dogs and cats into the homes of senior citizens, helping them overcome loneliness.

Overall, pets have a positive effect on their senior companions, and benefit health-wise from their very presence.

Excerpted from:

www.petsfortheelderly.org/articles.html



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SPOTLIGHT ON CAREGIVERS

Caregiving Stages: Stage 2

Over the next several issues we will run a series showing the challenges facing family caregivers at different stages in the caregiving process.

Stage 2: The Freshman Caregiver

I am starting to help an aging relative.

Who are you?

You have been helping an aging relative for a short time. Your duties range from errand-running and bill-paying to hands-on care.

Your keyword: *Find*

Find services that help. Find support that comforts. Find ways to enjoy your hobbies and interests.

Your Purpose:

This is your entry into the caregiving role. This is your time to experiment, to get your feet wet and see what works. This is your opportunity to learn how the health care industry works with, or in some cases, against, you. Now is the time to shape your caregiving personality: What duties are you comfortable with? What duties make you

uncomfortable? How well are you and your care recipient getting along? What situations would create overwhelming stresses for both of you?

As a “freshman caregiver,” what can you do?

1. *Learn as much as you can about your care recipient’s illness, disease or condition.*

Consult the local branches or chapters of national organizations such as The Arthritis Foundation, the Alzheimer’s Association, The Cancer Society. What does the future hold for you and your care recipient?

2. *Learn how to provide proper care from health care professionals or from health care videos, manuals or books.*

If your care recipient is hospitalized or receives short-term therapy at a nursing home, ask the staff to show you proper caregiving techniques: lifting, transfers, bathing. Or, search the Internet for hands-on care information.

3. *Join a support group—online or in your community.*

It’s so isolating to be a caregiver!

Support groups will connect you with others in similar situations; often, you’ll learn of community resources and options from other caregivers that you were not aware of.

4. *Count on regular breaks from caregiving.* You can’t be a good caregiver to someone else if you don’t take care of yourself. Plan for regular breaks—whatever you can manage. Enlist the help of relatives and community services so you can take time off regularly. Relatives can help in many ways—through financial support, social support (calling the care recipient regularly just “to talk”), as well as respite support.

5. *Rely on help from community organizations.*

Meals on Wheels, home care agencies and day care centers, to name just a few, may offer services that your care recipient needs. Contact your local Area Agency on Aging for a listing of services and organizations in your community.

6. *Keep in mind what your care recipient’s wishes are.*

If appropriate, ask for his or her input and ideas. Does your care recipient still feel good about living at home? What does your care recipient fear or dread?

Excerpted from www.caregiving.com: The Caregiving Years, Six Stages to a Meaningful Journey, a handbook for family caregivers by Denise M. Brown.