

1-800-798-0988

www.alternativesforyou.org

CAREGIVER NEWS

Navigating the Holidays

The daily stressors that come with providing continuous care for loved ones can be overwhelming and all encompassing at times. It makes sense why so many care partners seek guidance, counsel, and respite to push through those really tough days. For some that stress may seem to double, or even triple, in size with the holidays right around the corner. Holidays are stressful enough for everyone, but add full-time caregiving on top of preparing a huge meal for the whole family, decorating, gift buying, all while feeling holly and jolly? Forget about it... But there are things we CAN do this holiday season to minimize stress and maximize the feelings of joy and gratitude with our loved ones.

Start New Traditions & Don't be Afraid to Simplify

For many, becoming a caregiver required accepting a "new normal" when it comes to day to day living. That same approach should be applied to the holiday season. It's OKAY if things don't look the same, if activities need to be altered or switched out completely, or if holiday meals need to be reformulated and simplified. Try to find the joy in creating NEW traditions with the ones you love instead of focusing on how things have changed.

The Internet is my Friend

Don't lose sleep over trying to run all over town buying gifts, gathering supplies, or finding that perfect Christmas tree ornament. Your time is precious and the internet is your friend! Try utilizing some good, old fashioned online shopping to make things a little easier for yourself. Many retailers even offer gift wrapping! Place an online grocery order to get everything you need for meal prep or clean up. And if you can't make it to that holiday gathering across town or out of state, try using Facetime or Zoom to virtually spend time with the ones you love.

Give the Gift of Self Care

It goes without saying that it is physically impossible to be everything to everyone and be everywhere at once. We are only human and we should always give ourselves grace to be just that. Don't be afraid to take care of yourself first. Get adequate sleep as much as possible, eat full and satisfying meals to fuel your body, and give yourself permission to seek joy whenever and wherever you can. What makes you happy during the holidays? Is it Christmas music? Make a playlist and dance around the house. Baking? Decorating? Gift shopping? Make time for the things YOU love and find new ways to incorporate them even if that means asking for help from others. Friends, Family, or organizations like Alternatives can lend a helping hand, a supportive ear, or guide you to the resources that are available to you.

Caregiver Support— one-on-one support services with Caregivers feeling overwhelmed in their caregiving role with the goal of reducing stress and strengthening their natural support system.

Care Coordination— professionally certified Care Coordinators provide free, in-home assessments to identify and set up supports for individuals living independently in the community.

LTC Ombudsman— meet with nursing home residents to help resolve concerns or complaints. They provide a listening ear to residents and families.

Adult Protective Services— investigate and resolve reported cases of self neglect, abuse, neglect, or financial exploitation for older adults, (over age 60) and adults with disabilities (age 18-59).

Money Management Program— assist individuals with bill paying, writing checks, budgeting and balancing their checkbook.

Bridges Community Center- Aging & Disability Resource Center for the lower two thirds of LaSalle County. Offering options counseling and assistance with benefits registration including Medicare, Medicaid, state supported programs, or other available benefits. Bridges offers a full calendar of events for active older adults.

To unsubscribe to this newsletter please call 309-277-0167 or email ehanna@alternativesforyou.org & you will be taken off the mailing list. Thank you.

It is Alternatives' mission to promote the independence & quality of life for older adults, adults with disabilities, & their families.

Alternatives programs have served 10 Counties in Midwestern Illinois since 1984.

Designated by the State of Illinois, Alternatives is the lead advocate for adults over 60 and their caregivers in their service area of Rock Island, Henry, Mercer, LaSalle, Putnam, Knox, Henderson, Warren, Bureau, and McDonough Counties.

Additionally, Alternatives' Ombudsmen serve Brown, Hancock, Schuyler, Adams, Pike, and Calhoun Counties.



Gifts & Giving

*Struggling with what to get the older adult in your life or been asked what you want when you have every **THING** you need? Read on...*

- **Have ladder, will travel**—Have your gift recipient complete a “honey-do” list and offer up an afternoon to complete all the small projects around the home. Everything from changing burnt out lightbulbs, smoke detector batteries, washing windows, laundering curtains, and cleaning cobwebs and gutters, are tasks that require getting on a ladder.
- **Fill the fridge**—If you have skills in the kitchen, offer to stock the fridge and/or freezer with meals that can be popped in the oven or microwaved. No skills? Order a meal from a local restaurant or groceries from the store and have it delivered directly to the home.
- **Pamper yourself**—Many caregivers have to be convinced to take care of themselves and a lot of well-meaning gift cards go unused each year. Book a massage, mani/pedi, or barbershop appointment for the both of you. Not only will you make sure they are taking care of themselves, but you'll both get the added benefit of socialization.
- **Give'm a break**—Offer to spend time with their care recipient while they get out or offer to take their care recipient out of the home while they get some much needed rest.
- **Seasons past**—Haven't driven around and looked at lights or baked Christmas cookies for years? Resurrect a tradition from the past and spend time reliving some memories. This is also a good way of including someone with memory loss into family traditions that may feel overwhelmed attending the day of celebration with the entire family.
- **That's a wrap**—Still need a gift for under the tree? Break out the family photo albums and go on-line to order custom made puzzles, playing cards, mugs, and blankets with your most memorable family pictures. The worse the hairstyles and plaid bellbottoms, the better!

*Do you have questions, need resources, or just someone to talk to?
Monthly Caregiver Counselor appointments are available at local community centers:*

	Monthly Date:	Time:	Contact for appointment:
Bureau Co. Senior Center	3rd Wednesday	1:30-3:30 pm	815-879-3981
Mercer Co. Senior Citizen Center	4th Tuesday	9—10 am	309-582-7221
Mendota Area Senior Center	3rd Tuesday	10 am-Noon	815-539-7700
Putnam County Community Center	3rd Tuesday	1:30-3 pm	815-339-2711
Bridges Community Center	4th Monday	10-11:30 am	815-431-8034