



# CareLINK

*A Newsletter For Caregivers*

**FEBRUARY 2011 /  
MARCH 2011**

*A Caregivers Newsletter that is published every other month for those who care for a loved-one, no matter the health situation. Enclosed we hope you find helpful information that you can use!*

*CareLINK can also be found at:*

<http://www.co.kenosha.wi.us/dhs/Divisions/Aging/>

**~Sponsored & Published By The Aging & Disability Resource Center of Kenosha County~**

## **Communication – The right words can make *all* the difference**

Everybody needs skills to communicate effectively. Listen *actively* and make a conscious effort to understand the other person, whether in your own family, or in a professional caregiver relationship. This is especially important when problems or issues arise:

**Assess the situation.** Listen to every person who is involved to figure out what the issue *really* is. Look for meaning and *emotions behind* what is being said.

**Let them know you understand.** You can share their feelings without becoming overwhelmed by their issues.

**Be a reporter, not a judge.** Use *facts* rather than opinions or assumptions to describe a medical problem. Say, “Sam can’t climb up a set of stairs without help,” instead of “Sam may have a heart problem.”

**Maintain personal balance.** Allow yourself time to decompress and have a separate life, filled with your own activities and down time. Find people you can confide in when you are confused or overwhelmed. Join a support group if you feel isolated.

**Avoid guilt, depression, and judgments.** Grief, frustration and feeling overwhelmed are normal emotions. Accept the tough outcomes and still feel good that you gave it your best.

When communication fails, stress levels go up. Higher stress is associated with heart attacks, high blood pressure, and more severe diabetes symptoms. Stay healthy—and help those in your care stay healthier—by asking yourself these questions:

- **Is what I am arguing about really important?** Pick your battles.
- **Am I storing up resentments?** Stay on the topic—don’t bring past issues into the current discussion.
- **Don’t take it personally.** You don’t need to get angry just because you don’t like what someone is saying.

Aging & Disability Resource Center  
Of Kenosha County  
8600 Sheridan Road, Suite 500  
Kenosha, WI 53143



*When you need answers...*  
262-605-6646 or 1-800-472-8008  
[www.co.kenosha.wi.us/dhs/Divisions/Aging/](http://www.co.kenosha.wi.us/dhs/Divisions/Aging/)



## Communication & Dementia

Remember, it is most important to treat a person with dementia with dignity and respect. Avoid talking down or talking to others who are present as if the person with dementia is not there. At all times be aware of your tone of voice and body language. Do not use the high-pitched voice that people sometimes use when speaking to children. Lower your pitch and volume, and stay relaxed. Try not to stand over the person if he is seated, which may be interpreted as being bossy or intimidating.

The person in your care may not understand your words, but he may nevertheless respond to the tone of your voice or your posture, and he will intuitively decide whether to respond to you as friend or foe. Coping with changes in communication is one of the biggest challenges that caregivers and family members face when caring for persons with dementia. Unfortunately, the challenge increases as the disease progresses.



## Change Negative Self Talk

We all have “tapes” that play in our head, whether we’re aware of them or not. They are the things we tell ourselves out of habit, sometimes habits formed in childhood. For a couple days, write down the thoughts that you catch flowing into your head. See how many of them are positive, and how many are negative. Then, consciously try replacing any negative thoughts with positive, encouraging ones. You’ll feel better almost instantly.

## Falls



Falls are the leading cause of death, injury and hospital admissions among the elderly population. Last year, more than 1.6 million seniors were treated in emergency rooms for fall-related injuries.

A few reasons why Seniors fall:

- Failure to exercise regularly results in poor muscle tone, decreased bone mass, loss of balance and reduced flexibility.
- Impaired vision, including age-related vision diseases, as well as not wearing glasses that have been prescribed.
- Medications, like sedatives, anti-depressants, and anti-psychotic drugs, plus taking multiple medications, increase the risk of falling.
- Health conditions, such as Parkinson’s, Alzheimer’s and arthritis cause weakness in the extremities, poor grip strength, balance disorders and cognitive impairment.
- Hip replacements and other surgeries leave an elderly person weak, in pain and discomfort and less mobile than they were before the surgery.
- Environmental hazards, such as poor lighting, loose carpets and lack of safety equipment

### **Free Falls Risk Assessment**

**For persons 65+  
With history of falls or  
balance problems**

**Contact  
Kenosha County ADRC  
262-605-6646**

## Did you Know?

Health literacy is the ability to read, understand, and act on health care information. Nearly 50% of all adults may have problems understanding prescriptions, appointment slips, informed consent documents, insurance forms, and health education material. *Source: National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS)*

Patients with poor health literacy tend to be more responsive to information designed to promote patient action, motivation, and self-empowerment than to detailed facts.

If you think the person in your care has difficulty understanding written or spoken directions, a good approach is to say, "A lot of people have trouble reading and remembering these materials. How can I help you?"

Use commonly understood words. For instance, use "keeps bones strong" instead of "prevents osteoporosis."

Slow down and *take time to listen* to the concerns of the person in your care. Create an atmosphere of respect and comfort. Build trust with the person.

*Source: Center for Health Care Strategies, Inc.; www.chcs.org*

## Receive future CareLINK Issues by e-mail.

If you are interested in receiving CareLINK by e-mail please go to the website address below to subscribe:

[http://www.co.kenosha.wi.us/dhs/Divisions/Aging/Newsletter/  
Newsletter\\_CareLink.php](http://www.co.kenosha.wi.us/dhs/Divisions/Aging/Newsletter/Newsletter_CareLink.php)



## Helpful Resources



### Alzheimer's Association - SE Wisconsin Chapter

<http://www.alz.org/sewi/>  
or call, 1-800-272-3900

Provides information, advocacy, and a 24/7 helpline.

### Support Groups

For information on local support groups, please contact the ADRC at  
262-605-6646 or 1-800-472-8008.

## ~Take Note~



### Understanding Medicare:

The Benefit Specialist program will offer this workshop which covers a basic overview of the Original Medicare, as well as other health and prescription drug coverage options. You will learn how to read and understand a Medicare Summary notice and how to file an appeal. It also covers other helpful benefits you may be eligible for.

**Date/Time:** Thursday, February 17th, from 10am - 12pm.

**Location:** Northside Library, 1500 27th Avenue, Kenosha, WI.

**OR**

**Date/Time:** Thursday, March 24th, from 2pm - 4pm.

**Location:** United Hospital - Kenosha Medical Campus, 6308 8th Avenue, Kenosha, WI.

Please call the ADRC at 262-605-6646 or 1-800-472-8008 for additional information and to register as space is limited at each workshop.



### Power-Of-Authority for Health Care:

Help is available to complete a Power-Of-Authority for Health Care form through the Kenosha County ADRC. The forms are available at no cost and there is no fee for the assistance provided.

**Date/Time:** Every Wednesday from 9am - 12pm (no appointment is needed).

**Location:** Kenosha County ADRC, 8600 Sheridan Road, Suite 500, Kenosha, WI.



### Powerful Tools for Caregivers

A 6 week educational series designed to provide you with tools you need to take care of yourself and manage your caregiving situation. The workshop will help caregiving families *thrive* (not just survive). All caregivers from Kenosha and Racine County are encouraged to attend.

**Dates/Times:** Mondays, April 11th - May 16th, from 1pm - 4pm.

**Location:** Lincoln Lutheran, 2000 Domanik Drive 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Racine.

**Cost:** \$10.00 for materials with scholarships available.

Kenosha County residents can register by calling Anita Potts, Kenosha County Aging & Disability Resource Center at 262-697-4578. Racine county residents can register with Marilyn Joyce, Racine County Aging and Disability Resource Center at 262-638-6678.

~Just A Thought ~

*Faith is taking the first step, even when you don't see the whole staircase.*

*~ Martin Luther King Jr.*