



# The Family Caregiver

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Newsletter of the Lewis-Mason-Thurston Family Caregiver Support Program

Winter 2021

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## Greetings and Happy 2021!

Many are grateful for this annual renewal the New Year allows. We get to review our past year, including an examination of our caregiving burdens, then make our resolutions. A fresh look always helps make for a fresh start.

As part of our fresh or refreshed look at New Year, in this edition we will cover Burnout and Seasonal Blues. Not the lightest topics, but perhaps timely and important for many of us.

Our review of our past year may reveal resentments, emotional exhaustion, or cynicism from providing care. Those are symptoms of caregiver burnout and beg to be addressed.

“Burnout” was coined in 1974 and marked by emotional exhaustion, de-personalization, and reduced feelings of personal accomplishment. The term “burnout” is so much part of our vernacular, I wonder how it might have been expressed, if at all, by caregivers 100 years ago?

The context for burnout is the ongoing provision of care with new needs and increasing demands. As their needs change and perhaps increase, it requires you to figure out new strategies, learn new techniques, or recruit more volunteers or professional help.

The Burnout occurs when your EXPECTATIONS for your ability to handle the increased demands are not met by an equal amount of available resources, time, and emotional bandwidth.

If you expect yourself to fill all the needs for someone’s care, you are at risk of feeling depleted, de-personalized: in short, Burned-out.

We have been hearing from some of you about your successes and struggles over the past year. Many of them are deeply personal. Some include challenges and lessons others have or still might experience.

If you have a caregiving story you would like to share with others, consider sending them to us ([john.mcbride@dshs.wa.gov](mailto:john.mcbride@dshs.wa.gov)). We will be compiling them and of course with your permission, may be included in a future newsletter, The Family Caregiver article or our website.

# Seasonal Affective Disorder

We all have a relationship with sunlight and some of us are like human barometers. If the sun isn't out, we feel less sharp, perhaps less social, tired and craving carbohydrates. We may have our own names for this phenomenon, such as winter blues or cabin fever. Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) is an actual medical diagnosis which is a depressive-like feeling from the seasonal lack of sunlight.

While an official diagnosis of SAD is best from a medical examination, most medical professionals say that Washingtonians can all benefit from the recharging rays of the sun. We all might be running a bit low, just like your solar powered yard lights, which struggle to even glow this time of year.

While SAD is more common in younger women, the stresses of caregiving can bring it on or bring a reoccurrence. It often effects sleep patterns, especially the feeling that you want to sleep all the time.

## ***Suggestions for winter blues:***

- A. Check with your medical provider if you are concerned that your experience is more than a temporary feeling of the blues.
- B. Add more light to your day. Turn on more light in the house. (Turn them on this time of year by 3PM to maintain the light level BEFORE it begins to fade outside. When the sunlight begins to fade, melatonin (nighttime brain chemicals) is triggered in your brain, and you have a fight on your hands to maintain your serotonin (daytime brain chemicals) to keep you awake and alert.
- C. Use full spectrum or Ott lights. Some people swear by these kind of lights, which mimic the sun's subtle color spectrum, just like in a rainbow and much better than the pink tinted florescent lights.
- D. Get outside. Even on a cloudy day, sitting on your front porch for an hour, you can get 1,000 Lux. If the sun comes out for the hour, your personal "Lux-meter" can reach the coveted 10,000 mark. But many people feel tremendous benefits with less light exposure such as 5 Lux. We have such personal chemistries!

*Even the darkest night will end and the sun will rise.*

*Victor Hugo, Les Misérables*



**6 week series will be every  
Tuesday starting  
February 23, 2021 \* 1-3 PM**

**This year Powerful Tools for Caregivers will be brought  
to you via Zoom.**

**A commitment to attend the entire series is requested;  
pre-registration is required.**

**Call 360-664-3162 ext 102 for registration**

Join the Alzheimer's Associations free dementia education webinars in January . Learn about a variety of dementia-related topics from the comfort and safety of your own home. Each webinar held live with time for Q&A. Topics include effective communication strategies, legal and financial planning for Alzheimer's and more.

Learn more and register by clicking the date of the webinar below. For a full list of course descriptions, visit: [alzwa.org/education](http://alzwa.org/education)

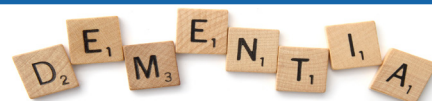
**We are now meeting via Zoom!!  
Contact us for the zoom link to attend.**

If you have joined us in the past, thank you for your questions.

If you are attending now, we are glad to have you.

If you are thinking of attending, just come.

***"Come with questions, leave with answers."***



**STUDY GROUP**

|              |   |                     |
|--------------|---|---------------------|
| In SHELTON:  | Second Wednesday of the month from 1-3 PM | (360) 427-2226 x102 |
| In CHEHALIS: | Second Thursday of the month from 1-3 PM  | (360) 748-2524 x102 |
| In OLYMPIA:  | Third Thursday of the month from 1-3 PM   | (360) 664-3162 x102 |



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## FAMILY CAREGIVER SPECIALISTS

### *Mason County*

2008 Olympic Hwy N /P.O. Box 2087, Shelton, WA 98584  
360-427-2226 or toll free 1-888-545-0910  
Bethe Eichler - Ext 259

### *Thurston County*

2404 Heritage Ct SW, Olympia, WA 98502  
360-664-3162 or toll free 1-888-545-0910  
Laurie Lembke - Ext 106  
Brittany Begley-Dennis, MSW - Ext 167

### *Lewis County*

1651 S. Market Blvd., Chehalis, WA 98532  
360-748-2524 or toll free 1-888-545-0910  
Joan Vance, MSW - Ext 210  
Kathy Howard - Ext 149

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For an online copy of this newsletter please visit our website at [www.LMTAAA.org](http://www.LMTAAA.org)

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# FRIDGE NOTES

*(yes, take this page & put it on your refrigerator!)*

Caregiver Burnout is real. It is not your imagination. Burnout is a state of physical, mental and emotional exhaustion. A few of the causes for Burnout are:

- Unrealistic Expectations, because caregiving is difficult enough without mentally or physically over reaching what you are able to do.
- Identity Discrepancy which occurs when your role e.g. daughter, spouse, etc. changes to caregiver, but it is difficult to admit, see or accept the change.
- Lack of Control which speaks for itself. So much of caregiving is out of your control thus difficult to plan your life or relax for a day.

How do you know when you are experiencing Burnout? Are you:

- Getting sick more often?
- Irritable?
- Seeing changes in your appetite, weight or both?
- Withdrawing from family or friends?
- Physically or emotionally exhausted?
- Losing or lost interest in activities you used to enjoy?
- Feeling like you want to hurt yourself or your care receiver

If you answered yes to 2 or more of the burnout symptoms listed above, call your physician, call a friend, or call us!

*Turn this page over for some more suggestions to help with burnout.*

## Suggestions for burnout:

- Find someone you trust such as a friend, co-worker or neighbor, to talk about your feelings and frustrations.
- Set realistic goals- accept that you may need help with caregiving, and turn to others for help with some tasks.
- Be realistic about your care receiver's disease- especially if it is a progressive disease like Parkinson's or Alzheimer's.
- Don't forget about yourself! Set aside time for yourself, even if it's just an hour or two. Remember, taking care of yourself is NOT a luxury—it is an absolute necessity
- Learn as much as you can about your care receiver's illness. The more you know the more effective you will be and the better you will feel about your efforts.
- Accept your feelings. Allow what you feel. Acknowledging what you feel helps you from becoming more conflicted and less effective.
- Get help- Some options are Adult Day Care, Telephone Check-ins, Dial a Lift, Support Groups. Veteran's Aid and Attendance, AAA's Information & Assistance, Churches, Respite Care, On-line Support Groups, and Counseling.



Lewis-Mason-Thurston Area Agency on Aging  
Phone: (360) 664-2168 • [www.LMTAAA.org](http://www.LMTAAA.org)