

# Will & Power

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FROM THE PIONEERS ASSISTANCE FUND

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## NEW YEAR, NEW APPROACH

**Q: Over the holidays, I noticed my father-in-law became very impatient and frustrated with my mother-in-law. She gets confused and sometimes repeats herself, and he starts to yell. Is this normal?**

**A:** It's not normal, but it is common. It's called caregiver burnout and it requires your attention because both of your in-laws are potentially at risk. Your father-in-law is risking his own health and well-being, while placing your mother-in-law at risk for verbal abuse. Sound alarming? Please read on.

According to the American Geriatrics Society, over 43.5 million Americans are caring for an aged spouse, parent, or both. Taking care of another adult is very taxing and can cause depression, exhaustion and physical pain. The stress of caregiving is magnified when the caregiver has other responsibilities, such as work or kids, and when the care recipient develops memory problems in addition to physical needs.

Caring for an adult is different from caring for a child because we have different expectations of adults. When an aging loved one can no longer feed himself or needs help using the toilet, it shifts the relationship dynamics in uncomfortable

ways that no one likes to talk about. We expect to be able to reason with adults when problem-solving, but a person with dementia cannot reason, resulting in frustration and arguments.

### WHAT TO DO?

Talk about it. It's probably the elephant in the room anyway. Let the caregiver know you are willing to listen to their concerns. Reassure them that no one can do it alone and you are here to help.

Learn more about it. The Alzheimer's Association has terrific resources for caregivers ([www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org)), as does AARP and many county senior service offices.

Prevent it by learning to ask for help and care for yourself. - Read our next article about taking care of yourself, whether you are a caregiver or know someone who is. And, as always, call our social workers for a listening ear anytime.

Sources: "Tips for Avoiding Caregiver Burnout" at <http://www.healthinaging.org/resources/resource:tips-for-avoiding-caregiver-burnout/>  
"Caregiving: Recognizing Burnout" at [my.clevelandclinic.org](http://my.clevelandclinic.org). Family Caregiver Alliance 1-(800)-445-8106.

## JOKE OF THE MONTH

*Why was the math book sad?  
Because it had so many problems.*

- A Prairie Home Companion Pretty  
Good Joke Book

## WILL CALL

*Do you or someone you know  
need our assistance? Call toll-free  
(888) 994-3863 or [wrpioneers.org](http://wrpioneers.org)*



## 15 WAYS TO TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF IN 2015

**This is the year you learn to take care of yourself. You cannot care for others if you are falling apart. You'll have better quality of life, stronger ability to cope with life's challenges, and better health if you take these simple, positive self-care steps.**

1. Keep learning. Search the Internet, listen to the radio, read the newspaper, books, ask experts, such as your doctor.

2. Stay social. Call friends, email cousins, know your neighbors. Do not isolate!

3. Exercise. A daily stretch makes you feel good and supports your mood. Dance!

4. Get outdoors. The sunlight hitting your retina staves off depression. It's good to get out and see the world is big. It makes your problems seem smaller. Walk to the mailbox.

5. Eat well. High quality foods, such as whole grains and fresh produce have always been good for you. Enjoy your food. Sign up for home-delivered meals if that will help you.

6. Sleep. Develop a nighttime ritual. If you care for someone, sleep when they sleep. Use respite resources if you need to get some quality sleep.

7. Wash your hands. Frequently.

8. Listen to music. It is known to improve brain function and memory. Sing!

9. Laugh. It beats crying and is good for your breathing, too. Find humor where you can.

10. Learn to ask for help. Friends, neighbors or family want to help but they don't know what you need. Be specific and keep it simple, "Can you drop us at an appointment so I don't have to park." Another friend can pick up.

11. Accept help. "No, thanks, I can do it," is not always true. You can't do it all. No one can. Accept that, and any offers of help that come your way, even a casserole.

12. Manage your money. Worrying about finances is stressful. Learn about saving, how to start saving or how to prepare a budget Visit <http://americasaves.org/>, plus our social workers can help you create a budget, too!

13. Set goals. Small goals that can be reached in a day are empowering and motivating.

14. Celebrate reaching goals. Getting through a day of intensive caregiving is a great accomplishment. Take pride in what you are able to do. Appreciate your efforts.

15. Positive praise. Put positive energy into the universe and it will come back to you. Thank people. Give compliments freely. Help someone else. Tell yourself, "Good job today."

**To receive a free Self-Care Assessment or to discuss ways to take better care of yourself, contact one of our social workers today.**

### QUOTE OF THE MONTH

*People's minds are changed though observation and not through argument.*

- Will Rogers