



CARE NOTES

A Newsletter for Family Caregivers of Persons with Brain Injury

SPOTLIGHT on ...

... Caregiving and the Holidays – how to alleviate the additional stress and enjoy the Season !!

It's that time of year again – the Holidays can be stressful for everyone, especially for those in the role of caregiver for a loved one with brain injury. Care Notes would like to offer some tips and suggestions to help make your Holidays more manageable and less stressful:

- **Take care of You:** Remember to fit exercise into your daily schedule. It is important to get your needed sleep. Keep to a routine as much as possible. Also, depression can be more prevalent this time of year for everyone, so don't hesitate to contact your healthcare provider if you feel symptoms of depression coming on so it can be treated if necessary.
- **Travel:** If you are traveling with your loved one, make sure to bring along spare parts for equipment such as valves for oxygen tanks, spare glasses, or tubes for wheelchair tires. It might seem like a hassle but it could make all the difference in your vacation. Also, remember, if flying, to keep all medicines in marked prescription bottles and remember to carry on medications that may be needed during flights instead of packing them in your suitcase.
- **Online Shopping:** Now it is easier than ever to shop for loved ones and friends without having to leave home. You can also purchase wonderful food items online. Many companies have deals on shipping and other incentives for online shopping.
- **Write it Down:** Make lists for all of your holiday needs including gift giving ideas, special meals to prepare including a special grocery shopping list, holiday decorating ideas, pre-holiday chores to accomplish, and special attire or holiday outfits.
- **Plan Ahead:** This time of year it is essential to plan ahead. Plan for events you would like to attend to assure you have extra homecare assistance scheduled if needed. Plan holiday meals ahead to assure you have all needed items from the grocery store. Cook items ahead of time that can be frozen until needed. Plan and purchase extra essentials for house guests. There will always be last-minute stressors so planning ahead will keep stress to a minimum.
- **Decorating:** Keep it simple – the holidays are all about enjoying time with your loved ones, house guests, and friends. Decorating can be done to a minimum with lots of enjoyment for everyone. Concentrate on the rooms your guests will spend the most time in – the kitchen/dining room, den/living room.
- **Have a Budget:** Make a holiday budget that is in your financial comfort zone – remember it's always the thought – not the amount of the purchase that matters. Keep track of purchases and resist impulse buying as much as possible.

Knowing your limits can be the key to managing the daily demands of being a caregiver, and this becomes even more important during the holidays. The staff of Care Notes wishes you and your family a happy, stress-free holiday season!

My New Year

Can you recall
How before your fall
The holidays used to be?
Those fancy parties, finger foods
And all our friends to see!

But then last May
That fateful day
When you fell and hit your head.
The doctor called and said come quick
"I'm on the way," I said.

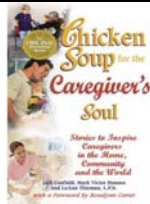
After fifteen weeks
Of lows and peaks
You re-learned how to talk.
I felt so much joy the day you came home
But some things were still a shock!

The you and me
As we used to be
Has changed some since last year.
Each week is a challenge that ends with some growth
And sometimes sparks my fear.

But this holiday season
I am able to reason,
That even if sometimes I've cried,
I would trade the festivities, the gifts, and the lights
Just to keep you by my side.

By Anonymous

Great reading ideas specifically for Caregivers ...take a closer look at these reading suggestions from Amazon on the web. Visit them at www.Amazon.com



Chicken Soup for the Caregiver's Soul: Stories to Inspire Caregivers in the Home, the Community and the World by Jack Canfield, Mark Victor Hansen, and LeAnn Thieman.

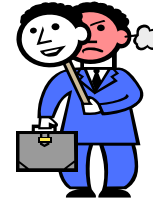
Over 54 million people in America help care for ailing or recovering family members and friends and millions more give of themselves to others through day care, eldercare, emergency and community service. While rewarding, care giving requires tremendous emotional, physical and spiritual stamina. Chicken Soup for the Caregiver's Soul offers a respite to those who give care through inspiring and uplifting stories about the work they do and its power to transform lives. Through awe-inspiring glimpses of real-life experiences of others, readers will find the motivation to overcome a challenging day, welcome recognition for their selfless contributions, and the encouragement to continue making a positive difference in others' lives.



The Fearless Caregiver: How To Get The Best Care For Your Loved One and Still Have A Life Of Your Own by Gary Barg

This book clearly defines your vital role in developing your loved one's care plan. It teaches you to deal successfully with managed care organizations, home health services, and especially your loved one; and arms you with the knowledge and skills you need for deciding if your loved one's care is appropriate, if your doctor is the right one, if something more is needed. From wills and powers-of-attorney, to practical tips for dealing with disabilities, to long term care options, to battling stress and depression -- the shared wisdom in this book comes not only from the experienced editors of "Today's Caregiver Magazine", but also from the inspiring personal stories of readers of the magazine who have learned to "stand up to the system when the system no longer stands up for your loved one."

Researchers at Carolinas Rehabilitation are looking for persons with a traumatic brain injury (TBI) who have trouble with emotions and cognition (thinking) to participate in a research study.



The purpose of the study is to see if certain treatments are effective at improving emotional and cognitive problems after TBI.

Persons interested must:

1. Have had a moderate to severe TBI.
2. Had a TBI at least one year ago.
3. Be between 18 and 65 years old.

What's involved in this study?

1. Those who are interested will come to Carolinas Rehabilitation to review details about the study. Persons who decide they would like to participate will be asked to complete several activities that will determine if they are further eligible for the study. (Declining to participate will not in any way harm relations with your doctors or with Carolinas HealthCare System).
2. Next, participants who are found eligible will be asked to return 3 weeks later for more tests and will be randomly assigned to one of the study's three treatment programs.
3. Participants will begin their assigned treatment program. Each of the programs is free and consists of 9 one hour sessions with a therapist on the computer 3 times a week, for 3 weeks.
4. After treatment ends, there will be 3 more testing sessions: 1) within 5 days after treatment ends; 2) 3 months after treatment; and 3) six months after treatment.

Things to consider:

- Participants will be paid for their time.
- Someone who knows you best will need to complete questionnaires on 5 occasions.
- You should have access to reliable transportation.

Call Sheri Bartel – (704)355-9629 or Dawn Neumann – (704)355-4211 to learn more about this opportunity.

...You Are Invited ... lots of food ... gifts... entertainment



A Celebration of Christmas
Saturday, December 5, 2009

11:00 am until 3:00 pm
Siler Presbyterian Church Fellowship Hall
6301 Weddington Monroe Road
Wesley Chapel, NC 28104

For persons with brain injury and their families - please join us

For additional information contact:

Peggy Philbrick 704-355-4354 or peggy.philbrick@carolinashhealthcare.org
Sponsored by Union County Area Brain Injury Support Network and Charlotte Area Brain Injury Association

Caregiver Holiday Wish List Ideas ...

... create and share your own wish list for the holidays ... others in your life will be happy you did. Some ideas include:

- **Respite:** Ask for time off from caregiving duties. This could mean another family member gives you a break. If this is not possible, perhaps they would consider paying for a home care worker while you enjoy a few hours or day for yourself.
- **Gift Certificates:** Ideas include a manicure, facial, favorite restaurant, or favorite bookstore. You can use the certificate after the holidays rush is over and the time is right for you. Also, those in your life will be happy to get you just what you want.
- **Home Repairs:** Take advantage of visits from family members. Prepare a "to do list" (i.e., changing light bulbs, cleaning out the garage, cleaning out gutters, raking the yard, painting, or other home repairs). Tasks such as these may be the perfect way for a family member to help out if providing personal care is too uncomfortable for them.
- **Treat Yourself:** Give yourself a gift – maybe that pair of boots you've been eyeing or perhaps a new winter scarf with your favorite colors ... you deserve it - self rewards are a great way to appreciate you for a job well done.

Information for this article was obtained from: **Caregiving and the holidays: from stress to success!**, Winter 2004 Newsletter, Family Caregiver Alliance . 180 Montgomery St, Ste 1100, San Francisco, CA 94104 . (800) 445-8106 . www.caregiver.org



Brain Injury Association of North Carolina Family Ombudsman Program

Over the next four years BIANC will work to establish a statewide brain injury family ombudsman program in North Carolina. The need for a family ombudsman program was very evident in the recent 2007-08 legislative session of the NC General Assembly. Due to funding limitations and licensure issues among several providers, continued access to residential programs for persons with brain injury was in great jeopardy. Families responded with extensive advocacy to legislators by making literally thousands of phone calls, office visits and personal pleas. This recent crisis has set the stage for the formal development of a family ombudsman program that can, not only react to specific needs, issues, and complaints, but can also have a proactive voice for legislative initiatives. This program will also work closely with the Advisory Council and the Lead Agency to help implement the Call for Action Position Paper (http://bianc.net/docs/TBI_Council_Call_to_Action.doc) developed by the Council. A network of family representatives will be recruited to serve as ombudsmen to the Lead Agency. They will represent families statewide who have a family member with TBI. A lead ombudsman will be identified and participate in Advisory Council meetings and attend the annual grantee leadership meeting. If you would like to learn more about the family ombudsman program or to become an ombudsman volunteer please contact Project STAR at 704-355-1502.

This information was reprinted from the Brain Injury of NC website
www.bianc.net

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Holiday Stress Assessment for Caregivers

by Michael Plontz

We can feel the stress lurking around the corner. We may not know what form it will take or how much of it we will have to endure, but we know that it's out there waiting. Wouldn't it be nice to evaluate the amount of stress we can handle as caregivers during the holidays? Well, now we can. The following chart may help you to decide which things you must continue through the holidays, and which ones you can let go. It is reprinted here from the sids-network.org web site.

HOLIDAY JOB LIST	Would the holidays be the same without it?	Do you do it out of habit, tradition, free choice, or obligation?	Do you like doing it?
Decorating the tree			
Baking holiday cookies or exchanging holiday cookies			
Making long lists of what needs to be done			
Going to office or school parties			
Sending holiday cards			
Buying something special to wear for the holidays			
Going to cocktail parties			
Doing your holiday shopping			
Seeing people you never see any other time of the year.			
Helping or encouraging your children to make some of their gifts			
Having the house clean ... clean!			
Decorating different rooms of your home			
Buying gifts for co-workers and teachers			
Attending special or traditional religious services			
Attending special activities for children			
Preparing special traditional foods			

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ABOUT CARE NOTES . . .

Care Notes is a newsletter for family caregivers of persons with brain injury. It is published quarterly by Project STAR at Carolinas Rehabilitation. Project STAR also houses one of three Family and Community Support Offices for the Brain Injury Association of North Carolinas (BIANC). The focus of Care Notes is to provide caregivers with useful information on services, opportunities and general items of interest. Sources are provided for articles included in Care Notes. This allows readers to gather more complete information by accessing the sources referenced in Care Notes.

We welcome your thoughts and suggestions. Please feel free to contact Project STAR and let us know what you would like to see included in Care Notes. You can contact us at 704-355-1502 or by email at mary.ruckart@carolinas.org.

Project STAR



Carolinas Rehabilitation