

The HomeLife Connection

HomeLife Senior Care (925) 240-5770

www.homelifeseniorcare.com

Winter 2021

CAREGIVER SPOTLIGHT



Introducing Felma!

Felma is one of our many outstanding and experienced caregivers. Our staff and clients have made special note of her reliability, professionalism, and experience. Felma truly stands out to our clients and they adore her.

We consider Felma to be a leader in Caregiving. She has a natural tendency to take initiative to ensure the best care possible for her clients.

Now more than ever, our clients are depending on Caregivers like Felma. Her genuine heart and commitment to our senior community is greatly admired.

Home Life is honored to have Felma on our team!

Happy New Year

Happy New Year! I think we all share the same mindset that saying goodbye to 2020 is a welcome relief. It certainly has been a different and challenging year worldwide as well as for our community.

Even though 2021 isn't looking much different, we are focusing on the goodness and joy that has surfaced amid the hardships. There is so much to be thankful for and included in this is our clients and families who have been patient and loyal as we've navigated this unfamiliar territory together.

Your health and wellbeing will always be our number one priority. We are committed to providing you with our high levels of safety measures, maintaining strong communication and delivering you the compassionate care you deserve and expect from us.

From our grateful hearts to yours, we wish you a happy, healthy, and joyful New Year!



Team HomeLife



- ❖ In 2020, HomeLife celebrated a “Decade of Love” as we hit our tenth year of business!
- ❖ Have a friend needing care? Why not tell them about us! We love referrals and if they sign-up for service, we offer a referral bonus.
- ❖ HomeLife offers care to fit your needs. No minimum hours!

Positive Mood in Older Adults Suggests Better Brain Function

Previous research has led to findings that support links between a positive mental outlook and physical health benefits such as lower blood pressure, less heart disease, and healthier blood sugar levels. In a recent study of mood changes in older adults, scientists also have discovered that healthy brain function may result in maintaining a positive outlook. For this study, which was published in the *American Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry* in September 2020, scientists proposed a potential neurobiological connection between an older adult's mood with changes, over a period, in white brain matter and cognitive ability. White matter is where information is transmitted from one brain region to another. As we age, changes can occur in the white matter that may lead to thinking, walking, and balance problems.

The scientists first examined measures of executive function, the ability to perform complex tasks such as planning or decision-making that require attentional focus, and then imaged the white matter of the brain. They found that the integrity of the white matter and stable executive function appear to be important for maintaining healthy mood states in late life. Research participants included 716 community-dwelling adults who were assessed to have normal cognitive and neurological function. Mood was measured using the Geriatric Depression Scale (GDS). The neuropsychological assessment included tests of executive function, memory, and processing speed (the time it takes to comprehend information and respond).

The investigators found that mood improved with increasing age until around the early 70s, at which point the positive effect of age on mood plateaued, and eventually reversed. Stable white matter integrity, along with stable executive function and processing speed, appeared to protect against this reversal of positive mood. Because the study was observational, these findings cannot be interpreted to show causation. Further research is needed to determine whether the brain-mood relationships are bidirectional. Researchers also suggest that future studies of the links between brain health, cognition, and mood should be large-scale, longitudinal, and use methods to allow capture of the full range of neurodevelopment. Results of such studies could inform interventions across a variety of neurodegenerative and neuropsychiatric conditions.

Reference: Cotter DL, et al.; the Hillblom Aging Network. *American Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry*.



Recognizing Depression in Your Elderly Parent

Source: Parentgiving.com



Stress can lead to depression. While many aging Americans look forward to a happy & healthy retirement, many seniors face a disproportionate number of stressors. Losing loved ones, feeling useless & unproductive after years on the job, loss or decline in physical senses, chronic illness, and the financial pressure of mounting medical bills can, and often do, lead to depression among seniors even if there has been no prior history of mental illness. Says Kathleen Buckwalter, PhD, RN, professor of gerontological nursing, "The elderly are less likely to cope with loss as well as young people because of the added years of meaning behind it, and the fewer years with which to move on." Aging experts agree it is important that adult children and other family members learn to tell the difference between the signs and symptoms of senior depression from ordinary feelings of melancholy.

Signs of Senior Depression

According to Joel E. Streim, MD, a professor of geriatric psychiatry "If your parent is not eating for more than a few days, or loses interest in activities that used to give him or her pleasure for longer than two weeks, it could be depression." Other signs of depression include:

- ❖ Feelings of persistent sadness, anxiety or feeling "empty"
- ❖ Pessimistic feelings, hopelessness
- ❖ Low self-esteem, persistent guilt, or feelings of worthlessness
- ❖ High irritability, restlessness, aggressive behavior
- ❖ Chronic fatigue and lack of energy
- ❖ Memory loss, difficulty concentrating, indecisiveness
- ❖ Disruption of sleep patterns
- ❖ Suicidal thinking, suicide attempts
- ❖ Pains, cramps, headaches with unknown cause that do not cease even with treatment

Looking at the above list you can see that many of these may also just be signs of aging, so it becomes particularly difficult to spot early signs of depression in the elderly. Dr. Streim also reminds us that depressed seniors do not always look depressed or express depression the same way younger folks do. An elderly parent may not tell you outright that they are "sad" or "feeling lonely" because they are afraid of being a burden on the family, but "they may show signs of distress by wringing their hands excessively, getting agitated or irritable, or having difficulty sitting still."

Keeping in touch and monitoring any changes is especially important now during the pandemic and in the winter months when many are alone and isolated. If you have concerns speak to your loved one's physician with your concerns so they can be addressed immediately.

If you believe a loved one is suicidal, you must take action! Call 911 if it is an emergency. Do not leave the person alone. Seek help from professionals who specialize in crisis intervention.

National Suicide Prevention: 800-273-8255
Veterans Crisis Line: 800-273-8255
Institute on Aging's Friendship Line: 800-971-0016

Ways to Boost Your Loved One's Morale During the COVID Epidemic

With visits to senior communities halted, and many families not able to visit our loved ones. Does not mean there are no other ways we can be creative in keeping in touch and keeping each other busy. So, what can you do to keep a loved one engaged and not socially isolated?

Here are ideas to show you are still there in spirit and still care.

1. Send snail mail

Handwritten cards and letters are more special than ever, perhaps because electronic communication is increasingly supplanting them. Recipients can display the cards and re-read correspondence to remind themselves that you care.

2. Share a virtual meal

Plan a long-distance date. Order what your loved one likes — and pay for it — via a meal delivery service such as Door Dash or Grubhub and make sure the meal gets there at the appropriate time. Then call to talk during the meal, making sure that your resident knows how to use a speakerphone feature on her cellphone or landline phone.

3. Use other delivery services

You know the snacks your loved one likes. Since you cannot bring a few packages of treats during a visit, arrange for a bulk delivery. For those in assisted living or independent living who still like to cook, you can get their grocery lists and do the shopping for them or use a shopping service such as Instacart. Deliver the food as close in as you are allowed and make sure to put the name and address or room number of the recipient on the boxes or bags.

4. Create your own virtual book club

If your kids are at an age where they love being read to, make sure Grandma or Grandpa has some kids' books they can read aloud (if they do not, order some online) using the video-calling feature on their digital device. Among the most popular video calling apps is Apple's FaceTime, but that is for iPhones, iPads, and Macintosh computers only. Amazon Alexa, Facebook Messenger, Google Duo, IMO, Skype, Viber and WhatsApp also work on Google Android, Microsoft Windows and other devices. Be sure to coordinate so that everybody is on the same platform. This way, grandkids of different siblings can be on the same story time call. Older kids can make the call more like adults' book clubs. Both grandparent and grandchild can read a couple of chapters of the same book and talk about their impressions or what they learned. Watching the same TV show, such as a documentary on Netflix or Amazon Prime, also can help spark discussion that spans generations. And if reading a book or watching a documentary isn't an option, perhaps because of your loved one's memory loss, help the kids in a sing-along. Singing old, familiar songs like "Happy Birthday," or classic hymns if they are religious can bring back memories and is a skill that often remains even if speech is difficult.

5. Order a jigsaw puzzle — of your family

Send a personalized puzzle to your loved one to help keep them occupied. Mail-order companies specialize in custom puzzles from photographs or perhaps your child's artwork. If your care recipient is a puzzle lover, you can have a puzzle delivered that contains 2,000 or more pieces. But also available are those with as few as 15 pieces, which might work well for people with dementia or less dexterity. While you are at it, order a coffee mug with the favorite family photo, too.

6. Assemble a hobby box

This is the time to find a nice box at a craft store, perhaps decorate it and fill it with items that your loved ones can come back to again and again. Put in items that will work with their existing hobbies or ask what they have always wanted to try. Think crossword puzzle books for those who like a brain challenge, paints, and suitable paper for those who have been artistic in the craft room, squishy balls and miniature Slinkys or other toys for those with a silly streak, yarn, and hooks for crocheters.

Source: Linda Dono. AARP



**Summer isn't the only time we need to stay hydrated.
We can get dehydrated in the winter months too!**

Remember to eat your fruits & vegetables... If it is difficult for you to drink water when it is cold, consider warm decaffeinated herbal tea or hot cider.

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5 Natural Ways Seniors Can Boost Their Immune System

With aging comes change in the body's immunity. The body's defense system doesn't work as well as it did in our younger days. Fortunately, there are steps older adults can take to compensate for the immune system's decline. Seniors should first discuss natural immune system boosters with their physicians

Consume a well-balanced diet: While this is important at every age, it is especially so for older adults. A healthy diet is the best way to take in the vitamins, minerals, and protein necessary for a strong immune system. Vitamin supplements should be considered but shouldn't rely too heavily on vitamins because the body absorbs and processes medications and supplements differently during older adulthood. That can make the benefits of supplements inconsistent.

Get a good night's rest: The body needs sleep to regenerate. This recovery time is even more important for older adults, who are more susceptible to inflammation, infection, and fatigue. Most health experts recommend eight hours of quality sleep per night. If you or a senior you love suffers from insomnia, help from a physician or sleep disorder specialist is vital.

Exercise and stay active: Exercise is another intervention to keep your immune system strong as you age. Exercising for 30 minutes at least five days a week may help you fight off illnesses. In conjunction with exercise, avoid sitting for long periods of time. A sedentary lifestyle is linked to health problems ranging from diabetes to high blood pressure.

Stay hydrated: People often underestimate the importance of good hydration. Water helps with energy, digestion, skin health, and sleep. It also allows the body to better absorb vitamins and minerals and eliminate waste. A good rule of thumb is to drink at least half your body weight in ounces of water every day. For example, a senior weighing 180 pounds should drink 90 ounces of water, broth, natural fruit juice, or tea each day. Consuming foods that have a high water content—leafy greens, berries, and melon—will also help.

Manage stress: Stress management is another immune booster people aren't usually aware of. Among the many negative health issues caused by too much stress is havoc wreaked on the immune system. Stress decreases lymphocytes, the white blood cells that help the body fight off infection. It also increases cortisol production. Over time, too much cortisol can increase inflammation. *Source: Senior Living*

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Immune Boosting Soup

This immunity boosting soup is a great way to keep your immune system healthy during Cold & Flu season as well as filling your tummy with a warm and comforting meal.

1 Tbsp. Olive Oil
1 Yellow Onion - Diced
6 Cloves Garlic - Minced
½ Tsp Fresh Ginger - Grated
1 Tsp Turmeric
½ Tsp Paprika
1 Tbsp. Lemon Juice
1 Large Sweet Potato - Cubed
1 15oz Can Chickpeas – Rinsed & Drained
1 Cup Red Lentils - Uncooked & Rinsed
5 Cups Vegetable Broth
½ Cup Kale (or Spinach)
Salt & Pepper to Taste

In large pot heat olive oil and cook onion for 8 minutes stirring occasionally. Add the garlic and ginger and continue to cook for 1 minute. Add Turmeric and Paprika, cook for an additional minute. Add lemon juice, sweet potato, chickpeas, red lentils, and broth. Bring to a boil.

Reduce heat and allow to simmer for 20 minutes. Lastly add kale or spinach until wilted. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

Enjoy