



Speaking with Grace

Our mission is to educate, coordinate, and facilitate individualized eldercare options one family at a time.

A Publication by Aging with Grace™, LLC  
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## National Breast Cancer Awareness Month Celebrating 25 Years of Awareness, Education, and Empowerment



The National Breast Cancer Awareness Month (NBCAM) organization is a partnership of national public service organizations, professional medical associations, and government agencies working together to promote breast cancer awareness, share information on the disease, and provide greater access to screening services.

In 2009, NBCAM celebrates its 25th anniversary. Since its inception a quarter century ago, NBCAM has been at the forefront of promoting awareness of breast cancer issues and has evolved along with the national dialogue on breast cancer. Today, NBCAM recognizes that although many great strides have been made in breast cancer awareness and treatment, there remains much to be accomplished. As we celebrate our 25th anniversary, we remain dedicated to educating and empowering women to take charge of their own breast health by practicing regular self-breast exams to identify any changes, scheduling regular visits and annual mammograms with their healthcare provider, adhering to prescribed treatment, and knowing the facts about recurrence.

While October is recognized as National Breast Cancer Awareness Month, the [www.NBCAM.org](http://www.NBCAM.org) Web site is a year-round resource for breast cancer patients, survivors, caregivers, and the general public. We encourage you to visit our site in October and regularly throughout the year as we add updated breast cancer information and resources. [www.nbcam.org](http://www.nbcam.org)

### Breast Cancer: Early Detection The importance of finding breast cancer early...

The goal of screening exams for early breast cancer detection is to find cancers before they start to cause symptoms. Screening refers to tests and exams used to find a disease, such as cancer, in people who do not have any symptoms. Early detection means using an approach that allows earlier diagnosis of breast cancer than otherwise might have occurred.



Breast cancers that are found because they are causing symptoms tend to be larger and are more likely to have already spread beyond the breast. In contrast, breast cancers found during screening exams are more likely to be smaller and still confined to the breast. The size of a breast cancer and how far it has spread are some of the most important factors in predicting the prognosis (outlook) of a woman with this disease.

### October Observances

- National Breast Cancer Awareness Month
- Eye Injury Prevention Month
- Halloween Safety Month
- Healthy Lung Month
- National Chiropractic Month
- National Dental Hygiene Month
- National Domestic Violence Awareness Month
- National Physical Therapy Month
- Talk About Prescriptions Month
- Fire Prevention Week 4th - 10th

### Aging with Grace Online Talk Show

Join host **Patricia Grace** each Monday evening at 6:30 PM EST



### Medication Safety and the Rx Guardian

1. Routinely checking the safety of your medications, screening for drug-drug and drug-disease interactions.
2. Alerting you and your doctor (optional) as important safety information arises for your medications.
3. Providing an easily accessible summary of your medications and conditions that you can share with your healthcare

Most doctors feel that early detection tests for breast cancer save many thousands of lives each year, and that many more lives could be saved if even more women and their health care providers took advantage of these tests. Following the American Cancer Society's guidelines for the early detection of breast cancer improves the chances that breast cancer can be diagnosed at an early stage and treated successfully.

## The Ten Commandments of Caregiving



Before undertaking any effort in life, such as these Ten Commandments, from The Leeza Gibbons Memory Foundation, always know that perfection is a false goal. Perfection in caregiving should be avoided at all times. These Ten Commandments are not for perfectionists and are created only for caregivers committed to the concept of "doing your best, no more nor less."

### COMMANDMENT I: TAKE THE OXYGEN

#### FIRST

As the FAA says, when the plane gets into trouble and the life saving equipment falls from the upper compartment, you take the oxygen first and then give it to your child. With only 19 seconds of useful consciousness in such a situation this approach gives both of you a chance of survival.

Caregiving is no different. At its base, caregiving is an experience of confusion, challenge and mixed emotions. Love for your family member and the satisfaction you derive from helping may create a situation where one sacrifices their lives at the "alter of caregiving." That sacrifice gives rise to conflicting emotions such as guilt, stress, anxiety and a host of other mental health challenges. It is imperative as a caregiver to take care of one's own mind, body and soul by taking the oxygen first.

### COMMANDMENT II: NEVER ASSUME

Caregivers are no different than others in that we tend to make assumptions about other people and situations before actually having gathered all of the needed information. In fact, when we make an assumption we are really passing judgment without even realizing it. How often do we assume that our loved one knows what we know, or knows what we need or desire to have happen, when in fact we are not all psychic? The result of this is often misplaced anger or resentment. Let's make a sincere effort to garner all the details before we make assumptions.

### COMMANDMENT III: HAVE ONGOING FAMILY CONFERENCES

Roles and responsibilities are extremely important to explain to all involved. Ongoing family conferences maintain the boundaries necessary to the caregiving process so that no one feels out of control or inadequate. This is a vital and should be done in person and as frequently as needed. Family conferences are like tune ups used to maintain the family car. This car needs to drive well, efficiently and for a long time. Schedule these conferences regularly, before the wheels fall off.

### COMMANDMENT IV: DO NOT ISOLATE

Social isolation can detach and separate a caregiver and give rise to a wide variety of stresses for those taking care of a loved one. Isolation is dangerous because it cuts off family members from outside help and support they need to cope with the stresses of caregiving. Isolation makes it harder for outsiders to see and intervene in a volatile situation.

Support groups help caregivers feel less isolated creating strong bonds of assistance and friendship. Participating in a support group helps caregivers manage stress by sharing their experiences and helping to improve caregiver skills. It may also help you to face that some problems have no solutions and that accepting the situation is reality. Join a Caregiver Support Group today

team.

4. Helping you learn and share treatment satisfaction and side effect information within our patient community.

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See The Rx Guardian on



Visit our Caregiver Blog



Connect with others who, like you, may be facing the same eldercare issues and challenges.

Do you have a specific question you would like answered? Visit our blog and [Ask an Expert](#)

**Cognitive impairments & geriatric-psychiatric disorders**  
Jason Young, MS

**Insurance claims advocacy and daily money management**  
Sheri L. Samotin, MBA

**Senior care funding alternatives and life settlements**  
Chris Crestis, Pres. LCFG

**Communications consultant specializing in education about dementia**  
Laura Bramly, Author

**Senior Mortgage Advisor**  
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**Wellness Programs for Retirement & Senior Living Communities**  
Wayne T. Phillips, PhD, FACS

Our Canadian Connection



[Elder Caring](#) was created to meet a growing need in the community for a coordinated, professional and interdisciplinary approach to service delivery with a focus on the health and

with a caregiver support group today.

## COMMANDMENT V: DO NOT TAKE ANYTHING PERSONALLY

Taking things personally is about self-importance, "the maximum expression of selfishness," where we assume everything is about "me." As a famous author once said, "Nothing other people do is because of you. It is because of themselves." The actual words said by your loved one are not what is hurting you; it is that you have wounds that are touched by what was said.

## COMMANDMENT VI: PLAN AHEAD/HAVE CONTINGENCY PLANS

Murphy's Law is a popular adage in our culture which broadly states that things will go wrong in any given situation. In American culture the law was named after an engineer working for a brief time on USA rocket sled experiments. No doubt if you are a caregiver than Plan A needs to be made but has to be followed up by Plan B, a contingency plan. Recognize what you can and cannot do, define your priorities, and act accordingly.

Turn to other people for help - your family, friends, and neighbors. Prepare clear written list of tasks for anyone who may offer assistance. Planning ahead is vital as it gets all on the same page, allows your loved one to feel safe and to have continuity, lessening their anxiety. What if I go before my loved one does? The answer is plan ahead!

## COMMANDMENT VII: DO NOT FALL PREY TO SHAME & STIGMA

Shame and stigma have tragic consequences. Caregivers with mental health challenges fail to seek help for themselves because of the shame associated with their condition. As a result of this feeling many think they will experience some form of discrimination, whether in the workplace, from health insurance plans or in social settings. They must get help for their behavioral issues in the same manner they would get help for any other medical condition. Though a loved one is surrounded by medical and behavioral complications at all times, matters get much worse if the caregiver represses their own mental health issues and keeps it in a closet. There is a high need for ongoing assessments for depression, anxiety, fear, alcohol usage and many other challenges. Often shame and stigma prevent vital access to in-depth evaluation of those on the caregiving path. There is no biochemical difference between a disease of the brain and a disease of the heart.

## COMMANDMENT VIII: USE COMMUNITY RESOURCES

A full complement of support services that address the caregiver and the recently diagnosed exists in every community. The quality and the extent of such a continuum of resources may vary but just know that neither a caregiver nor their loved one has to be alone. Supportive services may include medical, behavioral, legal, dental and various psycho-educational support groups. Investigate community resources that might be helpful.

## COMMANDMENT IX: HONOR SACRED MEMORIES

Empower yourself and your family using experiential approaches to memories. Take time to "remember." Get away from it all while relaxing with yourself and your loved ones. Use photography journaling, scrapbooking, holiday decorations or any other means to associate with the endearing "stories" of the family. If there is a Leeza's Place near you, make sure you schedule time for LMTV, Leeza's Memory Television. The caregiver and the care receiver can find common and connective ground in the face of the best and worst of times. Making sure that all members of the family are included is vital in this process. This is a great time to bring children into the process of honoring their elders and allows loved ones to connect in a valuable way. Keeping what emerges out of such a dynamic process is a great way to honor sacred memories and bridge the generations.

## COMMANDMENT X: FIND HUMOR IN MANY PLACES

"Laughter Is the Best Medicine." This is an old expression popularized by

delivery with a focus on the health and well-being of the older person and their family.



[Audrey Miller](#), the founder and Managing Director of Elder Caring Inc., is a Registered Social Worker, a Canadian Certified Rehabilitation Counsellor and a Canadian Certified Life Care Planner and a member of the Professional Association of Geriatric Care Managers.

**Patricia Grace,**  
National Senior Care Examiner



### Learn the Lingo

Follow along each month to educate yourself on the definitions of terms and phrases frequently used in; eldercare, senior housing and geriatric medicine.

#### **Medications Management**

##### **Medication Administration:**

Formalized procedure with a written set of rules for the management of self-administered medicine.

**Medigap Insurance:** A term commonly used to describe Medicare supplemental insurance policies available from various companies.

**Memory Loss:** Unusual forgetfulness that can be caused by brain damage due to disease, injury or severe emotional trauma.

**Non-Ambulatory:** Inability to walk independently, usually bedridden or hospitalized.

**Nursing Facility (NF):** Licensed to provide custodial care, rehabilitative care (such as physical, occupational or speech therapy) or specialized care for Alzheimer's patients.

### **Kids are Caregivers too!**

101 ways to spend time with A person with Alzheimer's disease

1. Listen to music
2. Carve a pumpkin
3. Color pictures
4. Make homemade lemonade
5. Count trading cards

Laughter is the best medicine. This is an old expression popularized by Norman Cousins's book "Anatomy of an Illness," in which he describes his battle with cancer and how he "laughed" his way to recovery. His hypothesis and the subject of many studies suggest that there are positive effects to be gained from laughter as a great tension-releaser, pain reducer, breathing improver, and general elevator of moods. It sounds miraculous, is not proven, but studies continue. In short, humor therapy is valuable and it helps us through difficult or stressful times. Try to see the humor in being a caregiver. Try writing on a card "Have you laughed with your loved one today?" and placing it in a conspicuous place in the bathroom or kitchen. Read funny books or jokes, listen to funny tapes or watch humorous movies or videos that make you laugh. Try it and you'll like it!

## Seniors Sometimes Need Assistance With Their Medication Regime

By Ruth Bredbenner



Managing medications for your parents means at times, traveling a distance as well as the fine line of being sure they are O.K. All the while, using extreme consideration for them as an independent senior.

Recognizing they may need some assistance and are reluctant to ask for help. The fear might even be that as their family you may feel they are incompetent in their self care.

If your senior family member has been ill and is now living home after a discharge from a hospital or a doctors office visit has meant many new medications for them. Be sure you follow up at their home. Go over their hospital discharge instructions and be sure they understand any precautions, instructions or restrictions they might have been given.

Review the new medications and compare them to their prescription bottles, confirming the instructions and the medication, and the dose are matching. They should have been given a medication educational sheet that explains the medication, its use and potential side effects. Their doctor should be notified promptly with any problems.

If they have many medications and have a potential for confusion, a medication chart can be set up as a display in the area where they take their medication.

A chart with a picture or the "pill" itself can be placed on the chart, next to it, what it is for— " Heart Pill"— and how it is to be taken.— Once each A.M.— This should be in print large enough for senior eyes. Medication that is a similar shape or color or similar sounding names, can add some risk of confusion. Be sure that it is clear to them and they are able to distinguish between them. Carefully differentiate them on the chart.

Seniors are at a greater risk for confusion when their routine has been changed. So after each doctors visit, update the chart and remind them frequently of the new change. They can have small cups or medication boxes, that are labeled the day of the week and the time they are to be taken. They can be pre-filled by the family on a weekly visit. They should be checked to be sure they have been emptied according to the medication regime.

If you as a family notice changes in the ability of the senior to care for themselves independently. And if you as a family are unable to do so, it might be time to ask your parent's doctor to have Home Health or Visiting Nurses see them in their home.

The use of a lifeline "emergency " button they can wear as a necklace can offer some peace of mind, and a sense of security, they then will be able to call someone if they need help.

Seniors, now have a better quality of life for a longer period of time. Their independence is very important to them, as it is for each of us. With the support and close observation by the family and friends they have the best of both worlds in healthcare maintenance.



The VA's own website ([www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov)) confirms that 75% of all VA pension applications (commonly referred to as Aid & Attendance) are denied the first time. The main reason VA applications are denied is because they are not complete and well-documented.

Here are 5 things you should know to avoid having your claim denied:

**# 1: Failure to Document Income and Unreimbursed Medical Expenses.** On the application, the VA can ONLY confirm the amount of your Social Security benefits independently. Everything else should be documented with a written explanation, this year's award letter or an annuity agreement. When in doubt, document it. Unreimbursed Medical Expenses should be documented on the VA form 21-8416. If you have any other recurring, ongoing or continuous unreimbursed Medical Expenses (including R&B), document them!

**# 2: Documenting Shortfalls.** If your Unreimbursed Medical Expenses, especially your Room & Board (R&B), exceed your income, the VA will ALWAYS delay your claim to clarify this. So, anticipate this question! If you are using savings or assets to meet this shortfall every month, explain this as an attachment to your application. If your assets are depleted, and a friend, sibling or family member is supplementing your R&B, explain this. To be sure the VA understands what is happening, write a simple loan agreement and submit it with your application. This will prove that you are borrowing this shortfall every month.

**# 3: Documenting Dependents.** According to the VA, a "dependent" is younger than 18, where the veteran is the father, or the veteran is married to the mother (step-children are fine). Grandparents must have court-issued adoption decrees. If dependents are under 23- years- old, they must be in school full-time. Spouses are dependents, but their income also counts, as well as their Unreimbursed Medical Expenses.

**# 4: Failure to Respond to Clarifications.** Always answer VA letters or phone calls as soon as possible. If you need more time, send a letter saying "I'm working on it". You have at least 60 days to respond and can supply the information within one year and still have a valid claim.

**# 5: Missing or Incomplete Information.** The VA pension applications are multiple-paged and have hundreds of questions. Address and answer every single one of them. If the question is non-applicable, answer "N/A"; if income is zero, answer with a "0". NEVER, EVER leave a space blank.

With the VA you can never provide too

When the staff you call never provides too much information. If they have to write you for clarification, your claim will be delayed or denied. Always include your phone numbers, an email address and a next-of-kin's contact information with every application.



The staff of Aging with Graces wishes all a happy & safe Halloween



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