

United Methodist Church Health News December 2011

Home for the Holidays

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 'Honor your father and mother' – this is the first commandment with a promise; 'so that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.'" Ephesians 6:1-3

This the time of year that many of us are together sometime during the holiday season. Whether we are at home with aging parents or grandparents or visiting other aging family members, we remember that we need to honor our parents as it is mentioned in different places in the Bible. But sometimes when we go to visit and as our relatives are aging we need to assess how they are doing in their living situation. How do you know when to suggest that more help might be needed or maybe it is time to think about a different living situation? It is always a difficult conversation to have with family.

I recently attended a web seminar taught by Home Instead Senior Care, office in California. Mary Alexander was the presenter. In this seminar she talked about how to enjoy the holidays with seniors as they are aging, what safety things to consider and what to look for as signs that changes are taking place.

Enjoying the Holidays with Seniors

According to Mary Alexander, the key to enjoying the holidays with senior relatives is to reduce stress. (Does that sound familiar?) Unrealistic expectations can cause much stress in the holidays. Seniors often cannot do all the holiday traditions they used to do. Reducing what activities you do can help and reducing the expectation that everything has to be perfect. Plan activities that all ages can enjoy and invite the senior to be with adults working in the kitchen or men outside working in the yard, garage, etc.

Sometimes dietary restrictions change as people age, so instead of cooking different foods - try using a buffet where people can eat what types of foods are on their diet and avoid others. Time saving tips might be to cook some food ahead of time and freeze it. Or use paper plates to avoid some dishwashing time.

Sometimes families need to decide which relatives to visit over Christmas. That can add stress in the family. Remember that the Christmas Season is not just one day and get-togethers can be at any time. If you are in a caregiver situation and your siblings come for the holidays, make sure to give them specific jobs to do and let them know how they can help. Communication is so important for everyone in the family.

Safety tips for Seniors

A few safety considerations during the holidays include:

- Arrange plenty of time for dealing with special equipment wheelchairs, etc. (Often you can find professional caregivers to help with a trip.)
- Balance is almost always a challenge, so watch for footing challenges with rain, snow and ice. Even throw rugs in the house can be a safety problem and entry ways into houses. Clear a pathway for walking.
- When traveling with the senior be sure to remember all medications, their address book and have a cell phone along.

Recognizing When Seniors Need Help

If you are visiting with your family member or friend for the Holidays, what might be an indication that more help is needed?

- Has there been a big change in how the house looks when you come to visit? The cleanliness of the house is usually the first thing to change and then nutrition comes next.
- Does the senior relative seem depressed?



News Bits

- **Blood Pressure check**
Sunday December 11th after both services
- **Parish Nurse hours** at church
10am - 2pm on Thursdays except December 15th vacation and December 29th memorial service in Illinois.
- **Parkinson Support Group**
December 1st at 1pm. Carl Grota, PT exercise and Ricki will be helping with chimes.
- **Wellness Committee**
December 1st at 10 am

Holiday Blues can be a problem with seniors. Depression is not a normal part of aging, however, and a trip to a doctor can rule out a physical problem. Seniors usually have more experiences of grieving and may be affected by Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). Adhere to a regular schedule and avoid drinking too much alcohol. Share stories from the past, use pictures, videos and music to stimulate memories. Make some new memories to create something to look forward to. If you are a caregiver who lives far away - encourage the senior to do something with a local church or senior center or hire a professional caregiver to spend time with a loved one.

So, "Honor your father and mother", enjoy Christmas holiday time with them or other family or friends you may have.

Many Blessings for the Christmas Season!

websites with helpful information: caregiverstress.com ,
rememberforalzheimers.com and caregiver.org



Compassionate Friends Candle Lighting

Sunday December 11th at 6:30pm in the Fellowship Hall
For anyone who is remembering a child of any age , who has died
A time of remembering readings, music, DVD show of children's pictures and lighting candles in memory.
Refreshments after the program.
Bring a picture to share for the picture table, if you would like.
Call Carol at 743-3476 if you plan to attend
Candles are provided