

# CAREConnections

Information and Inspiration for Caregivers

A Publication of Boulder County Area Agency on Aging

May/June 2017

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## Dear Caregiver,

This issue is about help: the nature of it, figuring out what you need, the kind that works for others, how to ask for it, where to get it, and more.

Most caregivers will admit that they could use more help (or perhaps *any* help), but they may be in a quandary about how to get it. You have the best chance of getting truly useful help by first asking yourself what you want. Do you need someone to help you learn about community resources? Would you like someone to stay with your loved one so you can take a break? Perhaps what you most need is a friend who will patiently listen as you spill your heart. Everyone's idea of "best help" is different; only you can know what will make you feel meaningfully supported.

And, by all means, don't limit yourself to just one kind of help. At Boulder County Area Agency on Aging (as at other agencies), we encourage family caregivers to make good use of every resource that is available to them. We know that caregiving is a uniquely challenging—as well as rewarding—responsibility, and the caregivers who have the greatest chance of succeeding (that is, of helping their loved ones without hurting themselves) are those who happily use all the help they can find.

We hope this issue will encourage you to seek out the help you need. And, remember, asking someone for help provides them the opportunity to be the best kind of human: a person who helps others. We all need the experience of being that.

*The Editors*



## Why You Haven't Sought Help—and How You Still Can

*by Sara Thompson*

**I**n my work with family caregivers, I often first connected with them in a crisis situation. While I was able to help them and avoid future crises, I always wished that they had reached out sooner. I wanted to help, and I was sad that they went through unnecessary stress. So, I wondered, why didn't they seek help before? There are a number of barriers that prevented families from asking for help—some that they were aware of, and some that were unconscious. I'd like to talk about some of those barriers and help dispel the concerns that prevent families from asking for help.



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**I didn't know this kind of help was available.** This is the easiest one! Until they *really* need it, many families don't know what resources are available. If you are caring for a loved one, or expect to be doing so in the future, contact the Resource Specialist at your local senior center. Each of the major towns in Boulder County (Boulder, Louisville, Lafayette, and Longmont) has vibrant and active senior programs with at least one Resource Specialist who can help you find what you need. This might include meal delivery, respite care, in-home medical services, volunteer programs, peer counseling, or support groups. You can also call the ADRC (Aging and Disability Resources for Colorado), with Boulder County Area Agency on Aging, for information about resources and referrals to appropriate agencies and programs.

**I thought I could do it myself.** Often you *can* do it all yourself, until you can't. Sometimes you will be on autopilot, scrambling to take care of everything each day and not realize that you're in over your head. You know how you're supposed to put your own oxygen mask on first in the event of an aircraft emergency? Taking care of yourself means that you are in good shape to continue to help your loved one. Family caregivers are at a much higher risk than the general population for many chronic health concerns and have higher mortality rates. The long-term stress of caring for a loved one takes its toll. There are usually people around you (friends, family, neighbors) who want to help but don't know how they can! Which leads me to the next barrier...

**I don't want to (or don't know how to) ask for help.** In general, the people around you *want to help*, and allowing them to do so is as much of a gift to them as it is to you. It allows them to spend time with you and your loved one and know that their help is supporting you. But, just as you might not know how to ask for help, they might not know how to offer it. Here's my best suggestion: Start keeping a list of things you do day-to-day that someone else could do. It might be grocery shopping, running a load of laundry, cooking a few meals, picking up prescriptions, or even coming over to have tea and visit with your loved one for a couple of hours so you can exercise or just take a break. Keep that list handy. When someone who cares about you says, "Let me know if there's anything I can do," you can give them a few ideas. I promise you, they *appreciate* this—it is hard to love someone who is struggling but not know how to help. This also lets you offer different tasks to different people, so you don't need to rely too much on only one.

**He (or she) doesn't want anyone to help but me.** This can be a tough one. First, ask yourself, have they told me that they don't want anyone else, or am I assuming that to be the case? If they haven't said that outright, they most likely would want you to have support. If they have said it outright, talk to them and see why they don't want anyone else. The reason might be:

- *I'm embarrassed / I don't want anyone to see me like this.* The losses of independence and function that come with a chronic illness or disability can create a lot of self-consciousness. However, friends and family really won't care about that stuff, and professionals have seen it all. You can also enlist people to help you in ways that don't embarrass your loved one, like with housekeeping, meals, or errands, so that you have time to do the more intimate care.
- *I don't want strangers in the house.* Services for older adults in Colorado are under a lot of strict regulations, including mandatory background checks for care providers, requirements for liability insurance and bonding, and documentation of care. This includes volunteer organizations. If you work with a reputable provider (for example, anyone listed on [BoulderCountyHelp.org](http://BoulderCountyHelp.org)), you can be confident that there are measures in place to protect you. And a stranger isn't a stranger anymore once you've gotten to know them. If this is a big issue for your loved one, I recommend starting slowly. Once they get to know the helper, they will look forward to seeing them again.
- *I don't need any help!* Sometimes it's hard for your loved one to see how much you are doing, and how much help they really need. It is so hard to lose one's independence and functioning, and denial is a powerful thing. This can be an issue especially when your loved one has dementia. If this is the barrier, it's

often received better when presented that *you* are the one who needs some help, and start enlisting help with things just for you, like housekeeping or errands. Once your loved one is used to seeing you get this help, and gets to know the person helping, they may be more open to getting some help, too.

If after talking about it you are still met with resistance, ask a professional to help with this conversation. Many times, when it's presented by an impartial party, help is more welcomed than if a loved one is suggesting it. As a professional, I was often able to get someone on board with care even though the family had tried many times. This could be a Resource Specialist from your city's senior services, a family therapist, or maybe the intake manager for a home care agency. Keep in mind that most home care agencies offer free evaluation visits with no commitment—you can meet with them, and if your loved one isn't ready yet, the agency will be ready for you when they are.

**Guilt.** The one that you love so much is sick, and you want to do everything you can for them. You don't want to be gone, even for a minute, in case they need you. You might also have conflicting feelings: frustration, disappointment, sadness, even anger. All of these feelings are normal and don't mean you love them any less. It is okay (and necessary) to take breaks. Absence makes the heart grow fonder, and they might need a break from you too! They might also feel guilty that you have to do so much for them. There's no reason to feel bad about needing some help or some time for yourself. If you get some help and take a break, resentment won't build up, and you will be refreshed and able to be totally present with your loved one. Also, it allows them some autonomy and interaction with other caring people.

**We can't afford it.** A totally valid concern. However, there are many low- or no-cost services,



and paid care isn't an all-or-nothing proposition. You can put together several different support options to keep costs down. Here's an example of a good strategy:

- Meals on Wheels so that you don't have to cook as much (Low-cost)
- Boulder County CareConnect volunteer services (Free)
- Boulder County Area Agency on Aging Companion Volunteers (Free)
- Private pay home care 4 hours every other week to give you an afternoon off (about \$200/month, offset by a \$500 grant from the BCAA Respite Assistance Program)

For more information about these and other resources, call your local Resource Specialist or the ADRC [see their phone numbers on the back page] or visit the service directory at [www.BoulderCountyHelp.org](http://www.BoulderCountyHelp.org) (select Seniors & People with Disabilities, then Service Directory).

There are many people who want to help you, within your personal circle and among professionals in the community. My hope is that you ask for help before you really need it, stay healthy and emotionally grounded, are better able to deal with the losses that you and your loved one experience, and keep the joy and love in your relationship with them.

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*Sara Thompson has worked with older adults and family caregivers for fifteen years: as a home care agency manager from 2002-2016, as facilitator of a support group for family caregivers of Parkinson's patients, and as a volunteer for Boulder County Area Agency on Aging. She is currently completing her degree in Human Development and Family Studies with a minor in Gerontology at CSU and is doing her internship with BCAA.*



## The Best Help You've Ever Gotten

by Emily Cooper

**F**or this issue on getting the help you really need, we asked numerous family caregivers about the best help they've received, and why it was so helpful. It's always good to hear what really works for caregivers rather than assuming we know what they need.

Several caregivers said their best help comes from family and friends. Not surprisingly, getting support from those we're closest to can be especially meaningful. Here are their responses:

*"Family support. The feeling of commitment to the good of caring for Mom. It provides badly needed emotional support."*

*"The best help I have gotten so far is when friends of my husband come over to visit him or offer to take him to lunch. It is important for him to get out or at least have someone other than me to talk to, and it allows me to do some errands that I might not otherwise get to (or even just go for a walk!), so it is good for both of us."*

*"To be recognized and appreciated by siblings and peers, especially during the long-term situations that can develop emotionally, socially, professionally, and financially."*

*"When doing live-in caregiving for my mother, whenever a friend of hers would offer to help, I'd ask them to come and visit with her for a couple of hours so I could go home to shower and change. We both enjoyed the break. One friend even loaned me his Mustang convertible for my 20-minute drive home! Best. Therapy. Ever."*

*"A friend/neighbor (who is also a spiritual adviser and a home health care adviser) helped me figure out what kind of issues I would need to deal with concerning my husband's condition and need for more care than I would be able to provide myself. Very helpful for organizing. It is useful to have an outside observer offer suggestions."*

Other caregivers named various community resources as their "best help" ever:

*“Resources that you all provide—peer counseling in particular.”*

*“The best help I’ve gotten was through Via. Until I learned that we could use their wheelchair van services, I was transporting my husband with our SUV, which was difficult for me and painful for him. It made our lives so much easier while he was still at home. More people need to know that they can use Via even if they are not on Medicaid or other assistance.”*

*“When my mom became more dependent and frail, a social worker for Boulder County Housing was the first person I reached out to, and she led me to a caregivers event [the Caregiving Symposium] in Longmont that had speakers as well as a trade show of booths. My eyes were totally opened. I had NO CLUE what all the acronyms involved in senior care meant. I did not know the difference between Assisted Living and Skilled Nursing. I did not know Medicaid covered home health care. I didn’t know home health care existed! That trade show was the best thing ever, but I would NEVER have gone without encouragement and education from the social worker, who met me there and helped me understand the basics. It helped me realize the difference between Medicaid and Medicare and who paid for what. I found out Mom qualified for Medicaid but had let it expire. I found out about Power of Attorney so that I could stem the flow of her cash to strangers, take over her banking, take over her paperwork for housing, etc. It was a shock to find myself in this position but I am so grateful for those in Boulder County Housing who led me forward. I discovered Via transportation and Care Link Adult Day Care. Life has really changed for the better for Mom and for me.”*

*“I attended the Powerful Tools for Caregivers class – excellent!”*

We often encourage caregivers to attend a support group, and the following responses from caregivers attest to the help that support groups can provide:

*“I have found the caregiver support group to be extremely helpful on many different levels: 1) ca-*

*maraderie of the group, each member experiencing very similar issues with their loved one; though all situations are different, there are many similarities. 2) our leaders are excellent in getting us to focus on our own well-being and self-care since we aren’t much good to our care recipients if we are exhausted, resentful, etc. 3) we are funny and it’s always good to laugh ... especially when things are hard to deal with.”*

*“The best help has been knowing that there is a group of people who are interested and also understand my situation. I appreciate the opportunity to build relationships based on shared experience and the continuity and foundation of the group. This has been helpful – just knowing this group is always here for me. People in the group have helped me understand the kind of help I need, because it’s hard to see your own situation clearly.”*

*“By far the support of my peers and our facilitators at the weekly caregiver support group. Without that help and intervention, I would have become sicker than my poor husband who was declining at a disconcerting pace. By going to the group and recharging my batteries, I could be resourced, understood, validated, and supported in making important decisions for his care and my physical and mental health.”*

*“[At the support group] the emphasis has always been on taking care of myself as a caregiver. Our group leaders always emphasize this – and we all need the reminders. It is most helpful in our support group to recognize what others are having to deal with.”*

*“The support groups that I have attended for two years ... It was a blessing when I found these groups. I also attend a weekly support group that has become my lifeline—wonderful people. Before I started attending the group, I felt I was ‘alone’ and had no idea how to face the issues that were present while caring for my elderly mother, who is ‘very difficult’ to say the least. I have become so confident as a caregiver and have gotten so much support from others in this group and have made*



*some wonderful, caring friends. I feel I have gotten so much from this group – my life has done a 180 and I have learned how to take care of ‘me’.*”

Home health care providers—whether privately paid or through the CDASS program—also earned votes as the “best care” ever:

*“The paid caregivers I have hired have been friendly, accommodating, helpful, and efficient. They have taken [my wife] shopping and have provided true friendship for her while I have been away. With this help I could run errands and do volunteering, knowing that she was in good hands. I have always been pleased that she was in a good mood whenever I have returned home.”*

*“CDASS provides 20 hours per week to pay attendants for my brother. These hours provide for most of his daily needs.”*

*“Having CDASS so we have caregivers in. The mental interaction and duties [they take care of] make a spouse’s life easier. It took the pressure off me to be the only caregiver since I also have a full-time job.”*

The kind of help that is most helpful is individual to each caregiver, but perhaps the responses from these caregivers will encourage you to try some of the things that have worked well for them. Support group, anyone?

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*Emily Cooper is Information & Referral Specialist for Caregiver Programs, and Editor of Care Connections, for Boulder County Area Agency on Aging.*

### **How to Get the Help You Really Need**

*by Claudia J. Helade, Ph.D.*

**H**ow, or even *whether*, to obtain the most valuable assistance for the myriad tasks of caregiving, including self-care, is a question most caregivers face at some point. Caregiving can be a lonely, overwhelming, and exhausting process if not for the tangible support of friends, family, professionals, and available local servic-

es. Asking for help is often difficult for most of us who live in a culture which prizes the illusion of independence and self-sufficiency. Caregiving stretches us in especially poignant ways to consider our capacities and needs and reach for support when necessary, yet we often do not know when help is needed or how and where to ask for it. Self-expectations, early and current family dynamics, and other cultural exhortations conspire to inhibit our asking for or accepting help when we need it.

Asking for help, an acknowledgement of our mutual interdependence, is a skill necessary for optimum caregiving, both for caregivers and those being cared for. Skills can be learned—we do it all the time. Seeking help is not without some difficulty, but giving ourselves permission to reach out is an act that empowers, offering solutions to situations we cannot manage as effectively alone. Asking for help can be a bridge to supportive connections which enhance the caregiver’s well-being in many, sometimes unexpected, ways. Often we as caregivers do not even recognize the need for help, let alone feel justified in asking for it, a situation which can lead to many unnecessary difficulties in our caregiving circumstances. We are all partners in the same dance: we need each other, and we each contribute valuable necessities in a web of connection often overlooked in our unquestioned need for the appearance of self-sufficiency.

Poet David Whyte, in his elegant book *Consolations*, says with great truth: “It may be that the ability to know the necessity for help; to know how to look for that help and then most importantly, how to ask for it, is one of the primary transformative dynamics that allows us to emancipate ourselves into each new epoch of our lives. Without the understanding that we need a particular form of aid at every crucial threshold in our lives and without the robust vulnerability in asking for that help we cannot pass through

the door that bars us from the next dispensation of our lives; we cannot birth ourselves. To ask for help and to ask for the right kind of help and to feel that it is no less than our due as a live human being; to feel, in effect, that we deserve it, may be the engine of transformation itself. Our greatest vulnerability is the very door through which we must pass in order to open the next horizon of our lives.” Now let’s look at some pragmatic ways to make it easier to ask for what we need.

A practical beginning is to set aside some private time to assess your situation and really ascertain what you need. Putting aside, even temporarily, any personal hesitation or aversion will help in making an honest list of needs. As complete a list as you can make, whether or not each item on it will need immediate action, is a fine beginning. Do not judge the need or whether you deserve to have it or anticipate the likelihood of not having it met. Avoid questioning whether the desired need is legitimate—it is if you feel it is. One way of organizing the list in order to address all of your needs is to sort them into one of four categories: *physical*, respite or simply catching up on sleep or an unhurried favorite meal; *mental*, the ability to discharge one’s professional obligations or to keep up with one’s study or passions; *emotional*, time with friends and other loved ones, personal renewal in whatever way gives joy or reduces stress and fatigue; and *spiritual*, any need that addresses the deepest meaning of the situation at hand or the space to be with one’s own center or source. Another way to begin the list-making process could be to wave the proverbial “magic wand” and allow yourself to imagine whatever would make your caregiving easier. Since it is a magic wand, imagine generously! Then record.

Once the list of needs is complete, the next step is to designate possible sources of support from among friends, family, professionals, and com-

munity organizations and services. Asking for support from specific family members may be challenging due to difficult long-standing family dynamics or residential proximity. Ascertaining whom to ask may take some accurate evaluations of capacity, willingness, and entanglements. Try not to make assumptions about another’s abilities or willingness. A request not able to be met is actually a strengthening of the muscle of asking; so if you ask, know you are on the right track. Be clear and specific in communicating your needs; and if an individual cannot help for any reason, ask another who may be able to. The idea is to meet needs and reduce stress. Friends are often willing and able to help but just need a specific task to offer, and your asking provides that. Often one person—a friend or family member—might be willing to ask for you, which would in itself provide a welcome solution to a need.

Some needs may be more appropriately or necessarily met by professionals in any one of a number of fields. Your local social service agencies, senior centers, or places of worship are good venues to become aware of what is available to you and your loved one. In the book *The Caregiver’s Compass*, Holly Whittelsey Whiteside brilliantly offers “A Program for Getting Help,” which includes four steps: 1) listing all of your activities, responsibilities, and needs and placing a star beside any for which a helper would be welcome; 2) identifying your advocates and supporters and matching them with a need; 3) familiarizing yourself with local agencies and organizations specializing in caregiver support; and 4) making contacts and requests with no firm expectations, one or a few at a time. Whittelsey Whiteside also offers a valuable guideline for approaching siblings for support.

With patience and persistence, almost all needs will find a satisfactory solution. Be open to creative collaboration with those who want to of-



fer help and enjoy the experience of getting needs met in ways that are expanding, empowering, and stress reducing. Our journey is a shared one, and the giving and receiving of what we have to offer and what we need is one of the deepest joys imaginable, erasing both the illusion of our separation and the very designations “giver” and “receiver.” Asking for and receiving help is necessary for a whole and meaningful life. Caregiving opens wide the door, offering both giver and receiver the opportunity to exchange the joy of participation in something ineffably larger than the self. Who knows, the support you seek may illuminate to you the strength of your community and your own empowerment and become a gateway to the transformation described above. One step at a time. Go ahead, ask!

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*Claudia J. Helade, Ph.D., is a psychotherapist, director of Into the Center, and member of the Care Connections Editorial Advisory Committee.*



## Caregiving for Yourself: What to Do When You're the One Needing Care

*by Mary Kathleen Rose*

**G**enerally, we think of caregivers as the people who care for others, either professionally or within a family. Over the years this newsletter has served to offer resources and suggestions for caregivers within the home or family of the care recipient. But what about the situation where you are the one needing care and you live alone? Or perhaps you are already caring for someone else? How do you get the care you need if, for example, you are waylaid by illness, surgery, or hospitalization and/or rehabilitation? Where do you turn when there is no one in particular who would fill the role of caregiver for you?

Some people have a friend or family member who can come in and fill the role of temporary caregiver. Or, maybe a circle of people can help if the need is greater, or they can assist during an extended period of illness or during rehabilitation after injury or surgery. But how do you ask for help? And how do you coordinate that help?

In recent years a number of online services have developed that help with coordinating care in time of need, such as Lotsa Helping Hands and others [see the following article for more information]. I interviewed Lynn, a single woman in her fifties, who sought help when she underwent consecutive hip replacement surgeries.

**Mary:** Lynn, what is your living situation?

**Lynn:** I live alone, with occasional roommates. When I had my hip surgery, I had a roomie who worked nights and another one who was not available.

**M:** Please explain your situation. What health condition set in motion the need for you to enlist help in your own caregiving?

**L:** I had two hip replacements, three months apart. Each time I was fifty percent weight bearing and used a walker and crutches. Exercise consisted of walks around the block every day with someone in attendance. I needed help getting food and drinks from the kitchen to the table, as I couldn't carry things while using the walker. I also anticipated needing help with laundry, cat boxes, and transportation to medical appointments.

**M:** Did you use an online service?

**L:** I used Lotsa Helping Hands.

**M:** How did you decide to use a community caregiving service?

**L:** It was suggested by a friend, who said it could help coordinate other friends and helpers to meet my needs for care.

*(continued on page 9)*





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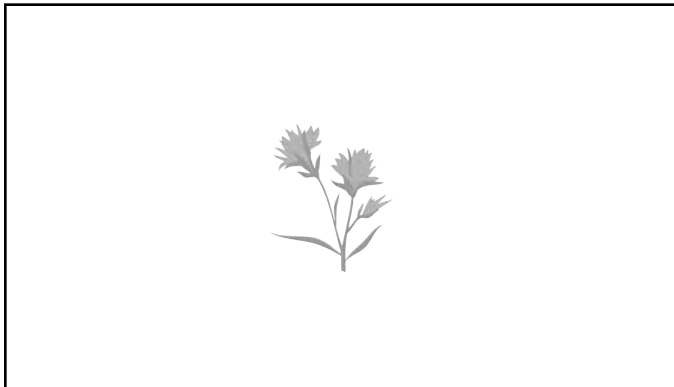
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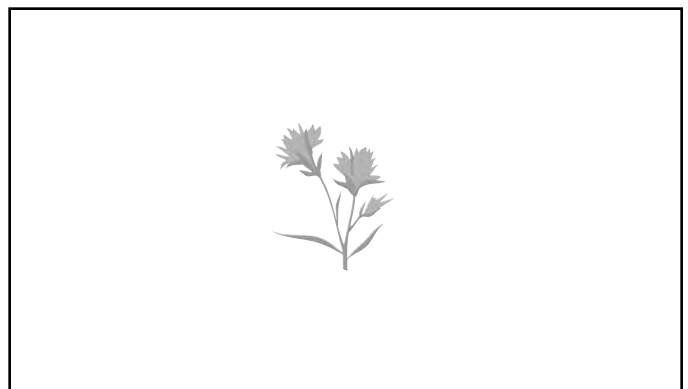
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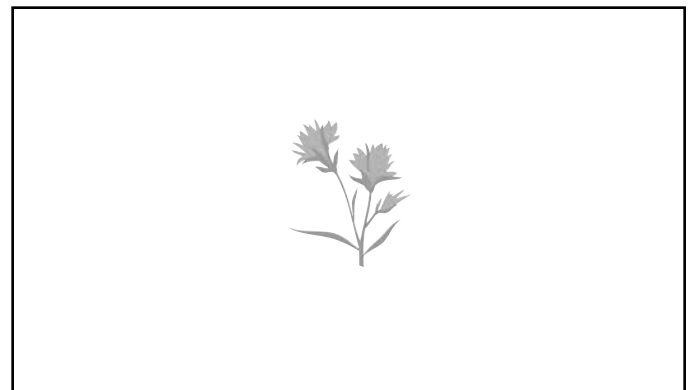
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## Caregiving for Yourself: What to Do When You're the One Needing Care

(continued from page 8)

**M:** Who coordinated it?

**L:** A friend set it up, and I continued as the administrator.

**M:** What were you hoping to gain by using this service?

**L:** It gave helpers a list of options and times and allowed them to schedule themselves. It reassured me that someone would be coming if I needed anything, and gave me a list of folks to call if I needed anything that wasn't on the website.

**M:** How did it work?

**L:** We set the schedule and listed needs: food, walks, rides, visits. Helpers could self-schedule, or I could add them to the schedule. Friends could go online and see where the needs were. I could also cancel shifts if I didn't need or want anyone to come. The site could do much more than what I needed.

**M:** What were the biggest benefits?

**L:** It gave me peace of mind. I got to enjoy my healing process and make the most of it.

**M:** What were the most difficult challenges?

**L:** Deciding to do surgery in the first place was the hardest thing. The second hardest thing was asking for help. My care team of friends reminded me that I could ask, and that I did deserve to get help.

**M:** What advice do you have for others in your situation?

**L:** Don't be afraid to ask for help. Friends are just waiting for you to let them know what they can do for you. And don't be afraid to say no when you need to.

**M:** When you needed caregiving, what was the most appreciated and useful help you received?

**L:** Once I decided to have surgery, it was helpful having someone listen to me, to hear my concerns and worries. And it was good to have them ask me what I wanted and needed, right down to the flavor of ice cream I liked!

**M:** If you had a magic wand and could ask for anything, as it relates to your own care of self by others, what would it be?

**L:** I would have a roommate or partner or friend be more present. One of the challenges was having too many visitors and not enough downtime in between helpers.

**M:** Anything else?

**L:** After the great experience I had, with all the help I received, I often recommend similar sites and encouragement to clients and friends who are considering surgery.

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*Mary Kathleen Rose (www.comforttouch.com) is a licensed massage therapist, health educator, and author of several books, including Comfort Touch of the Hands & Feet: A Guide for Family Caregivers.*

### Online Resources for Coordinating Help

by Barbra Cohn

**T**he following websites provide opportunities for caregivers to set up support networks of friends and family to help with caregiving:

**Lotsa Helping Hands™**, <http://lotsahelpinghands.com/>, is a tool to help caregivers network with a community established online. It helps coordinate support during times of crisis and caregiver burnout. For example, you're taking caring of your father at home, you have a 9-to-5 job, and you have two children to care for. You're burned out! Create a community of support on Lotsa Helping Hands to help you get your father to a doctor's appointment, have a meal delivered, get respite care, or whatever else you need. You can access this from anywhere you live in the world.

**Care Circles**, <http://www.carecircle.com/>  
A Care Circle program is a website that you can purchase and set up in about ten minutes to let friends and family know what kind of support you need. Included is a private website that has multiple features including a Home page, a Guest Book where visitors can leave messages, a Photo Gallery, and a Calendar where friends can volunteer to deliver meals, take the person you are caring for to an appointment, or provide respite care or housekeeping. You can add pages and title them any way you choose. You also get a Library that contains ideas on how to assess your needs, involve others, and ideas for advertising your site.

**CaringBridge**, <http://www.caringbridge.org/>, provides the tools for setting up a free website to share health updates, videos, and photos with family and friends who want to help. It is especially helpful during a crisis or for end-of-life assistance with the coordination of tasks such as delivering meals, providing childcare, arranging transportation, emotional support, and other organizational help.

**Meal Train**, <https://www.mealtrain.com/?id=bing>, is a site that helps you organize a meal delivery schedule after a birth, surgery, or illness. It is free, easy-to-use, and includes an interactive in line calendar, reminder emails sent to participants, the ability to list meal preferences and allergies, an online journal to provide regular updates to family and friends, invitations via Facebook, Twitter, etc., and much more.

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*Excerpted with permission from Calmer Waters: The Caregiver's Journey Through Alzheimer's & Dementia (Blue River Press, 2016, ISBN 978-1-68157-014-3-51699), by Barbra Cohn. Barbra is a writer, caregiver, and member of the Care Connections Editorial Advisory Committee.*

## Book Review: *How Can I Help?*

by Claudia J. Helade, Ph.D.

**H**ow Can I Help?, by Ram Dass and Paul Gorman, originally published in 1985 and now in its 28th printing, is a collection of stories and reflections on service. Ram Dass, spiritual teacher, consciousness researcher, and prolific author of, among many others, the book *Be Here Now* (which I also heartily recommend to every caregiver, whether to read for the first time or as a helpful review), and Paul Gorman, teacher, public affairs consultant, and multifaceted author, identify the question *how can I help?* as a timeless inquiry of the heart, illuminating the values we encounter in service to one another. Stories, exercises, and commentary alternate with surprising beauty and effectiveness throughout the book.

Chapters included in *How Can I Help?*, such as “Natural Compassion,” “Who’s Helping?,” “Burnout,” “The Listening Mind,” “Suffering,” and “Reprise: Walking Each Other Home,” serve as compartments of wisdom, practical support, and ultimately comfort for the caregivers who bear witness to aspects of the human condition involving their deepest values. This service, Ram Dass and Gorman explain, offers a path to awakening aspects of ourselves we have yet to experience. The understanding that we are all connected in a fundamental way is uniquely available to us as lived reality when we are open to caring for another in a way commensurate with our values.

With so many opportunities to engage in service to each other, questions such as *how can I deal with suffering?*, *what is the best way to help?*, and *can I effectively manage this task?* face those with the responsibility of caregiving—which actually is every one of us. According to the authors, our allies in these situations

*(continued on page 13)*



## COMMUNITY RESOURCES

*This column provides information about events and classes, services, and other resources of interest to family caregivers in Boulder County. Please remember that it is each person's right and responsibility to research a service provider or event before taking action. See "Information and Assistance in Boulder County" on the back page for ways to learn more about these and other resources. (To share information about a resource for family caregivers, please email [InfoCaregiver@bouldercounty.org](mailto:InfoCaregiver@bouldercounty.org) or call 303-678-6116. The deadline for the July/August 2017 issue is May 25.)*

Don't miss the annual **Caregiving Symposium** on Tuesday, May 16, 9:30 a.m. – 5 p.m., at the Plaza Convention Center, 1850 Industrial Circle, in Longmont. Pre-registration is required by May 8 for admission with lunch. Walk-in registration is permissible, but will not include lunch. Financial assistance for respite care is available. See page 14 for more details, or contact Emily Cooper, at 303-678-6116 or [InfoCaregiver@bouldercounty.org](mailto:InfoCaregiver@bouldercounty.org).

Medicare Counselors with Boulder County Area Agency on Aging hold **Medicare Basics Classes** for anyone wanting to learn more about enrollment, benefits, costs, and choices under Medicare, on Thursdays, May 4 and June 1, 2 – 4 p.m., at East Boulder Senior Center, 5660 Sioux Drive, Boulder (call 303-441-1546 to register); on Mondays, May 15 and June 19, 10 a.m. – 12 p.m., at Longmont Senior Center, 910 Longs Peak Avenue, Longmont (call 303-651-8411 to register); on Friday, May 19, 1:30 – 3:30 p.m., at Lafayette Senior Center, 103 W. Iowa Avenue, Lafayette (call 303-665-9052 to register); and on Wednesday, June 21, 1:30 – 3:30 p.m., at Louisville Senior Center, 900 W. Via Appia, Louisville (call 303-666-7400 to register). There is no charge, but donations are appreciated.

For more information, visit [www.bouldercounty Medicarehelp.org](http://www.bouldercounty Medicarehelp.org).

AgeWell, a program of Longmont United Hospital/Centura Health, holds an **Advance Directives workshop**, about considering and clarifying one's wishes for medical treatment in the event of incapacitation, with Program Coordinator Peggy Arnold, MA, on Thursday, May 11, 9:30 – 11 a.m. (\$5 fee for Longmont residents, \$6 fee for non-residents); and **What's New in Integrative Medicine ... Locally and Beyond?**, about the benefits and range of integrative therapies offered at Health Center of Integrated Therapies, with LUH/Centura Health, on Thursday, May 25, 9:30 – 11 a.m. (free). Programs are at Longmont Senior Center, 910 Longs Peak Avenue, Longmont, and require pre-registration, at 303-651-8411.

The Alzheimer's Association of Colorado has added two new regular programs in Boulder County: **Caregiver Support Group**, for persons caring for a loved one with Alzheimer's disease or another form of dementia, on the second Tuesday of each month, 12:30 – 2 p.m., at Longs Peak United Methodist Church, 1421 Elmhurst Drive, Longmont; and **Memory Café**, a place for persons with dementia, and their friends or family, to enjoy socializing in a comfortable setting, on the third Monday of each month, 1 – 2:30 p.m., at First United Methodist Church, 1255 Centaur Village Drive, Lafayette. Another **Memory Café** sponsored by the Alzheimer's Association meets on the first Monday of each month, 10 – 11:30 a.m., at Louisville Senior Center, 900 W. Via Appia, Louisville. For more information, call Ralph Patrick, Boulder County Regional Director, at 303-813-1669.

The Alzheimer's Association of Colorado offers **Know the 10 Signs: Early Detection Matters**, on Tuesday, May 9, 4 – 5:30 p.m., at Longmont





Senior Center, 910 Longs Peak Avenue, Longmont; and on Thursday, June 8, 10 – 11:30 a.m., at Aspen Lodge at Anthem Ranch, 16151 Lowell Boulevard, Broomfield; **The Basics: Memory Loss, Dementia, and Alzheimer's**, on Sunday, May 7, 10:45 – 11:45 a.m., at First Presbyterian Church, 1820 15th Street, Boulder; on Thursday, May 11, 7 – 8:30 p.m., at Silver Sage Village – Common House, 1650 Yellow Pine Avenue, Boulder; and on Tuesday, June 6, 10 – 11:30 a.m., at Natural Grocers (Vitamin Cottage), 100 W. South Boulder Road, Lafayette; **Living with Alzheimer's for Caregivers: Early Stage**, on Tuesday, June 20, 6 – 7:30 p.m., at MorningStar Assisted Living and Memory Care, 575 Tantra Drive, Boulder; **Effective Communication Strategies**, on Tuesday, May 16, 2 – 3:30 p.m., at Kaiser Permanente, 280 Exempla Circle, Lafayette; on Wednesday, May 24, 9:30 – 11:30 a.m., at West Boulder Senior Center, 909 Arapahoe Avenue, Boulder; and on Tuesday, June 13, 2 – 3:30 p.m., at Kaiser Permanente, 2345 Bent Way, Longmont; **Dementia Conversations** (about how to have honest and caring conversations with family members about going to the doctor, deciding when to stop driving, and making legal and financial plans), on Tuesday, June 13, 2 – 4 p.m., at Longmont Senior Center, 910 Longs Peak Avenue, Longmont; **Understanding and Responding to Dementia-Related Behaviors**, on Tuesday, May 2, 10 – 11:30 a.m., at First United Methodist Church, 1255 Centaur Village Drive, Lafayette; and on Thursday, May 18, 7 – 8:30 p.m., at Niwot United Methodist Church, 7405 Lookout Road, Longmont; **Legal and Financial Planning for Alzheimer's**, on Wednesday, May 3, 5:30 – 7:30 p.m., at Lafayette Senior Center, 103 S. Iowa Avenue, Lafayette; and on Thursday, June 8, 6 – 8 p.m., at Balfour Cherrywood Village, 282 McCaslin Boulevard, Louisville; **Healthy Living for Your Brain and Body**, on Thursday, June 22, 10 – 11:30 a.m., at TRU PACE, 2593 Park Lane (Forest Park Entrance), Lafayette; and **Science of Hope:**

**Progress Toward a World Without Alzheimer's Disease** (about the development and impact of Alzheimer's disease and past and leading research), on Wednesday, May 24, 2 – 3:30 p.m., at Broomfield Community Center, 280 Spader Way, Broomfield. See class descriptions at [www.alz.org/co](http://www.alz.org/co) (Classes and Workshops / Boulder). Pre-registration is required, at the website above, by calling the 24/7 helpline at 1-800-272-3900, or by emailing [hvolden@alz.org](mailto:hvolden@alz.org).

Longmont Senior Services presents **Listening with My Eyes**, a book reading with Patricia J. Conoway about how she learned nonverbal communication (body language) from her formerly abused and terrified horse, and how, by accident, she discovered that the same communication techniques also worked with her mother, who had Alzheimer's disease and lost her ability to speak; on Tuesday, June 20, 4 – 5:30 p.m., at Longmont Senior Center, 910 Longs Peak Avenue, Longmont. Free, but pre-registration is required, at 303-651-8411.

Boulder County Area Agency on Aging offers **Powerful Tools for Caregivers**, a 15-hour course that gives family caregivers the tools to help them take care of themselves, reduce their stress, communicate effectively, and thrive—not just survive—while caring for an older loved one, on Tuesdays, June 6 – July 18 (no class July 4), 1:30 – 4 p.m., in Longmont; and **National Caregiver Training Program**, an 18-hour course taught by a registered nurse that helps family caregivers acquire the practical skills need to provide safe, confident home care for frail older loved ones, on Thursdays, July 20 – August 31, 1:30 – 4:30 p.m., in Boulder. The courses are open to Boulder County residents who provide any level of care for a relative, partner, or friend who is age 60 or over, or of any age if the person has dementia. (The courses are not open to professional caregivers.) There is no charge, but donations are appreciated. Financial assistance for respite care (substitute



eldercare during class periods) is available. Pre-registration is required, at 303-678-6116 or [InfoCaregiver@bouldercounty.org](mailto:InfoCaregiver@bouldercounty.org).

Wellness Programs of Boulder County Area Agency on Aging offer **Healthier Living (Stanford University's Chronic Disease Self-Management Program)**, a course that helps participants with chronic conditions change their perspectives and manage their conditions, on Tuesdays, June 6 – July 18 (no class July 4), 9 – 11:30 a.m., at OUR Center, 220 Collyer Street, Longmont. There is no charge, but donations are appreciated. Pre-registration is required, at 303-441-3599 or [mpruitt@bouldercounty.org](mailto:mpruitt@bouldercounty.org).

For a complete list of **caregiver support groups** that meet in Boulder County, call 303-678-6116 or email [InfoCaregiver@bouldercounty.org](mailto:InfoCaregiver@bouldercounty.org).

### Book Review: *How Can I Help?*

(continued from page 10)

are compassion for ourselves, perspective, and humor, and their writing dips into the wisdom that has made this a classic handbook for the compassionate person who wishes to help from a clear and supported place. When we can deal with our own pain and fear, we are freer to help others.

*How Can I Help?* is wise, inspiring, and practical. The stories included are both intimate and universal in the questions they reveal about identity and relationship and the responses the authors propose. In the chapter “Natural Compassion,” the authors invite reflection about how we might identify our basic inner obstacles to achieving satisfying caring relationships and clarify them so we can be more present, loving, and helpful to others. Ram Dass and Gorman contend that “as the hold of these obstructions lessens, then, our generosity will flow more spontaneously and effortlessly. Compassion will come forth as needed, as appropriate, simply because it is its nature to do so.”

The chapter “Listening Mind” supports clearing the mind of agitation, fear, confusion, and depression, because our capacity to help depends upon the state of our own mind. A valuable exercise in letting go of these impediments to clarity and effectiveness is included, giving access to deeper power. The chapter “Suffering” offers the reader ways to discover tranquility in the midst of trauma by cultivating “a dispassionate Witness within,” a witness not desiring any particular outcome and therefore less likely to become reactive to circumstances. The exercise “Opening to Pain” is a valuable tool to begin or continue access to non-reactivity in our interactions with each other.

There are so many beautiful and practical ideas and exercises in *How Can I Help?* that support all of us in our daily lives to be more loving and effective friends, caregivers, family members, and professionals. Ram Dass and Gorman remind us that, as stated in the *Bhagavad Gita*, “No step is lost on the path...and even a little progress is freedom from fear.” “The reward, the real grace of conscious service, then, is the opportunity not only to help relieve suffering but to grow in wisdom, experience greater unity, and have a good time while we’re doing it.” Wonderful reminders! Gentleness with ourselves and others, a clearer mind, and a tranquil stance make the answers to *how can I help?* more powerful, effective, and illuminating—a gift without measure when facing the challenges and joys of caregiving with depth, confidence, clarity, and love. Thirty-two years later, the ideas in *How Can I Help?* continue to offer hope, healing, and a path to more exquisite interactions with those for whom we care—which naturally and necessarily includes ourselves.

---

*Claudia J. Helade, Ph.D., is a psychotherapist, director of Into the Center, and member of the Care Connections Editorial Advisory Committee.*



**PACE**

*Program of All-inclusive Care for the Elderly*

# Caregiving Symposium

*An educational event for family and friends of older adults*

**Tuesday, May 16**

**9:30 a.m. – 5 p.m. (come for all or part)**

**Plaza Convention Center, 1850 Industrial Circle, Longmont**

Resource Fair (9:30 a.m. – 4 p.m.) / Educational Materials

Complimentary Lunch (for pre-registered guests)

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Veterans' Services / Compassion for the Caregiver / Difficult Family Dynamics  
Caregiver Panel on Long-Distance Caregiving / Home Modification / Loss of Intimacy  
Understanding Alzheimer's from a Deeper Perspective / Making Good Medical Decisions for Your  
Loved One / Personal Care Tips / Legal and Financial Issues for Caregivers / And More

**General Admission is FREE. Pre-registration by May 8 is required, at 303-441-1685 or [www.2017CaregivingSymposium.eventbrite.com](http://www.2017CaregivingSymposium.eventbrite.com) .**

*Walk-in registration is permissible, but will not include lunch.*

*Financial assistance for respite care is available; call 303-678-6284.*

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## INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE IN BOULDER COUNTY

Within Boulder County, there are several ways to access information and assistance about resources and services for older adults and their family caregivers:

- Check out **Network of Care for Seniors and People with Disabilities**, a comprehensive online service directory, at [www.BoulderCountyHelp.org](http://www.BoulderCountyHelp.org) .
- Call the **ADRC Help Line**, at 303-441-1617, and Boulder County Area Agency on Aging staff will respond to your message.
- Call the **resource specialist** in your community (numbers below). Services vary by community but include identifying needs, exploring options, finding solutions, and providing in-depth assistance.

|                           |                                      |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <b>Allenspark area</b>    | 303-747-2592                         |
| <b>City of Boulder</b>    | 303-441-4388/303-413-7494 (bilingüe) |
| <b>City of Lafayette</b>  | 303-661-1499                         |
| <b>City of Longmont</b>   | 303-774-4372/303-651-8716 (bilingüe) |
| <b>City of Louisville</b> | 303-335-4919                         |
| <b>Erie</b>               | 303-441-1617                         |
| <b>Lyons area</b>         | 303-823-9016                         |
| <b>Nederland area</b>     | 303-258-3068                         |
| <b>Niwot area</b>         | 303-441-1617                         |
| <b>Superior</b>           | 303-441-1617                         |

