



Caregiver Support

Quarterly Newsletter

Making My Goals Matter: Looking Forward to the Year Ahead

Why Do Goals Matter?

- They provide a clear target for your goals. "If you aim at nothing you are going to hit nothing."
- They help to concentrate your time and energy
- They provide motivation, persistence and desire
- They establish priorities and help you identify what matters to you
- They provide a roadmap taking you from where you are, to where you want to go
- They increase your confidence and support your self-esteem

What goal do you want to pursue in the coming year? Be specific, put it in writing and consider sharing it with someone to help you remain on target.

Describe what will happen when you achieve the goal. Why does it matter to you? What will it accomplish? How do you imagine it will feel to achieve the goal?

What steps are needed to reach this goal? What can you do? Brainstorm the many ideas or steps you may take to get you closer to achieving success.

Define your steps. Whatever your goal, there are most likely many small measurable steps you may take to achieve success. If for example your goal is to lose 10 pounds in 6 weeks, you might identify the following steps:

- **Be specific** - walk briskly
- **Make it measurable** - I will walk 15 min each day
- **Action oriented** - I will walk
- **Be practical** - I can actually do this each day
- **Identify time frame** - 15 minutes per day for 6 weeks

Identify possible barriers and obstacles. You can expect every goal will require an investment of energy, and will be met with some resistance. The trick is to work with or VA Caregiver Support Line 1-855-260-3274 around the barrier to overcome the potential internal, external, or conflicting obstacles. For example, obstacles using the weight loss goal:

- **Internal:** lack of confidence, negative self-talk, fearful of change
- **External:** time, income, support, environment, physical limitations
- **Conflicting Goals:** I want to lose weight, but I find comfort in eating

Work with your obstacles: What alternatives can I use to work around the roadblocks?

- **Internal Alternatives:** I will notice negative talk and replace it with encouragement.
- **External Alternatives:** I will walk in the early morning when I have the time.
- **Conflicting Alternatives:** I will take a bath when I need comfort instead of overeating.

ONGOING EVENTS

Fargo VA
Caregiver Support Group
When: 1st Tues. of every month
Time: 5:30 – 7:00 pm
Where: Room 1C-86

Fergus Falls CBOC
Caregiver Support Group
When: 2nd Thurs. of every month
Time: 5:15 – 6:30 pm
Where: Chapel of the
Fergus Falls Veterans Home

Bismarck CBOC
Caregiver Support Group
When: 1st Tues. of every month
Time: 5:30 – 7:00 pm
Where: Bismarck CBOC
Conference Room

Fargo VA
Caregiver Support Coordinators:

Trisha Chadduck, LICSW
(701) 239-3700 ext. 9-3786
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Goals continued...

Focus on the here and now progress while also visualizing the goal achieved.

- Review your goals daily. Review your struggles and your progress. Keep your progress the focus of your daily attention. Pay close attention to what and who supports you through your journey.
- Visualize your goal being achieved. Create a clear mental picture of the end result. Use calm deep breathing and a clear picture of achieving your goal. Visualization can help you remain focused, calm and believing in your ability to reach your goal. Visualizations can be a positive motivator to help you stay on track and to help provide you a place of calm when you may struggle in working toward your goals.

Don't give up. We are rooting for you!

VA Caregiver Support Line 1-855-260-3274

March is National Nutrition Month

Nutrition and Health Tips from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

Eating Right with Less Salt

Most Americans are getting too much sodium from the foods they eat. And, the sodium in salt plays a role in high blood pressure, which is also known as hypertension. (Salt is the common name for sodium chloride.)

The *2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans* recommends that adults and children ages 14 years and older reduce their sodium intake to less than 2,300 milligrams a day. Adults with prehypertension and hypertension are encouraged to reduce their intake further to 1,500 mg per day, since that can help to reduce blood pressure. Here are ways you can eat right with less salt:



Focus on fresh foods

Many foods in their original form, such as fruits, vegetables, fresh meats, poultry, fish, dry beans, eggs, milk, yogurt and grains like rice are naturally low in sodium. Include these foods more often in meals and snacks.

Eat processed and prepared foods less often

Highly processed and ready-to-eat foods tend to be higher in sodium. Eat these foods only occasionally or in smaller amounts – especially cheesy foods, such as pizza; cured meats such as bacon, sausage, hot dogs and deli or luncheon meats; and ready-to eat foods, like canned chili, soups and "instant" flavored noodles and rice.

Cook more often at home

Enjoy home-prepared foods where you are in control of how much salt is added. Use little or no salt when cooking. Even if package instructions say to add salt to the water before boiling, it isn't required and can be omitted. When using canned vegetables with salt added, be sure to drain and rinse the vegetables to reduce the amount of salt.

Try new flavors

Skip the salt and try salt-free seasonings such as herbs, spices, garlic, vinegar, black pepper or lemon juice. Make your own salt-free seasonings by combining herbs and spices.

Continued on next page...

Nutrition continued...

Read food labels

Read the Nutrition Facts label and the ingredients list to find packaged and canned foods lower in sodium. Compare the amount of sodium listed and select the product with the lower amount. Look for foods labeled “low sodium,” “reduced sodium,” or “no salt added.”

Use caution with condiments

Foods like soy sauce, ketchup, pickles, olives, salad dressing and seasoning packets are high in sodium. Try low-sodium soy sauce and ketchup. Sprinkle only a small amount from a seasoning packet, not the entire amount.

Allow your taste buds to adjust

Like any change, it can take time for your taste buds to adapt to less salt. Foods lower in sodium may taste differently at first, but over time it's possible to acquire a taste for foods with less salt.

Salt-free Seasoning Blends

Boost the flavor of foods with salt-free herb and spice blends. Combine ingredients and store in a tightly covered jar. Rub or sprinkle them on food for added flavor.

Mixed herb blend: Mix together ¼ cup dried parsley flakes, 2 tablespoons dried tarragon and 1 tablespoon each of dried oregano, dill weed and celery flakes.

Italian blend: Mix together 2 tablespoons each of dried basil and dried marjoram, 1 tablespoon each of garlic powder and dried oregano and 2 teaspoons each of thyme, crushed dried rosemary and crushed red pepper.

Mexican blend: Mix together ¼ cup chili powder, 1 tablespoon each of ground cumin and onion powder, 1 teaspoon each of dried oregano, garlic powder and ground red pepper and ½ teaspoon cinnamon.

Source: www.eatright.org



Making the Most of Healthcare Visits

Successful visits with the health care team don't just happen; they require planning.

Before the Visit

It is important to bring a list of questions, pen and paper, or electronic device for taking notes when you meet with the health care team. It's easy to forget both what you and the Veteran wanted to discuss during the appointment and also what the provider has told you.

- Talk with the Veteran (when possible) and write down the questions you both have for the health care team.
- Make a list of symptoms and changes since the Veteran's last visit.
- Put together a current list of all medications.
- Confirm the appointment.

Providing a current medication list may help prevent drug interactions or other problems with medication from arising.

During the Visit

The provider may be directing their questions and conversation to the Veteran. This is their legal responsibility. Don't take over this relationship, but do correct misstatements and add omitted information. At the end of the visit, summarize the next steps to make sure everyone is in agreement about what is to be done and by whom.

- Describe symptoms and changes.
- Ask questions, especially related to medications.
- Record provider/nurse's instructions.
- Discuss recommendations.
- Verify follow-up.

After the Visit

It is important that you review the appointment with the Veteran, including how you both thought it went and the follow-up that was recommended. If medication was prescribed, it is critical that it be filled.

- Review notes with the Veteran (whenever possible).
- Discuss the visit.
- Fill prescriptions.
- Update the Veteran's patient file.
- Call for test results.
- Make follow-up or referral appointments.



Upcoming Caregiver Support Line Education Calls:

February – “Tending Loves Flame: Keeping the Love Alive”

Tuesday, February 5th at 9am CST

With encore sessions

Wednesday, February 13th at 6pm CST &

Wednesday, February 20th at 2pm CST

March – “Goodbye to Going It Alone: Learning to Ask for Help”

Tuesday, March 5th at 9am CST

With encore sessions

Wednesday, March 13th at 6pm CST &

Wednesday, March 20th at 2pm CST

April – “Tempering the Tyrant: Finding Angers Rightful Place”

Tuesday, April 2nd at 9am CST

With encore sessions

Wednesday, April 10th at 6pm CST

Wednesday, April 17th at 2pm CST

****To begin accessing these great calls please email or call one of your local Caregiver Support Coordinators who can assist with your initial registration!**

A Note from your Local Caregiver Support Coordinators:

The New Year is often thought of as a time for change. A time to redefine ourselves, our goals and our intentions. When you are in the role of being a caregiver this can feel overwhelming. How are you going to fit in time for you when your time is needed is so many other places.

It may mean setting small goals: five minutes of meditation or reading each morning, a hot bath once a week or coffee with a old friend. Or maybe it's taking on a larger goal you have been putting off for too long: a trip, house project or just an extended break. The VA is here to support you in reaching whatever goal you have to take some for you. Give us a call so we visit with you more about options!

Please feel free to contact us to discuss any of the information provided in this newsletter. If you no longer wish to receive this you may also alert us via phone or email:

trisha.chadduck@va.gov or amy.gunkelman@va.gov

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Caregiver Support Program Resources

VA Caregiver Support Line:

1-855-260-3274

The Caregiver Support Line is a toll free number (1-855-260-3274) for Caregivers, Veterans and/or Community Partners to call for supportive counseling, information, education, referral to community local resources and/or Caregiver Support Coordinators.

VA Monthly Caregiver Support Line Education Calls:

Participate in calls focusing on strategies to enhance resilience and restore balance. The calls are facilitated by the VA Caregiver Support Line. Typically one topic is offered each month at different times.

VA Peer Support Mentoring Program:

Peer Support Mentoring Program is a program that matches Caregivers with peer mentors, who can provide personalized support, guidance and friendship, experience and knowledge, and wisdom and skills about thriving as a Caregiver.

VA Building Better Caregivers:

Building Better Caregivers™ (BBC) is a six-week online interactive workshop for Caregivers who are caring for someone with dementia, memory problems, post-traumatic stress disorder, a serious brain injury, or any other serious injury or illness. BBC helps Caregivers in two key ways: it offers training in how to provide better care, and it also helps Caregivers learn how to manage their own emotions, stress and physical health.

VA Caregiver Website:

Go to www.caregiver.va.gov and sign up for email updates on caregiver topics. Look at the Diagnosis Care Sheets, download Everyday Tips and Checklists, read other Caregiver stories and more.

VA Guide to Long Term Services:

Go to <http://www.va.gov/geriatrics/guide/LongTermCare/> for VA's complete guide to services and supports to help Veterans and Caregivers make decisions and choices about their future healthcare needs.

There are many other local VA and Community programs and services offered. Call us today to discuss and sign up for any of the above services or learn more about other services and programs.