



## **CONSCIENTIOUS CARE**

### ***Making Choices for a Healthier Future***

Celebrated each May, Older Americans Month is an opportunity to celebrate aging and to spotlight issues unique to the age 65 and older population. In line with the 2007 national theme of "Making Choices for a Healthier Future", we highlight five choices common to older adults using the acrostic D.R.E.A.M.

- **D is for Dreams.** Make every day count. Consider what matters most in life and brings you joy. Make choices that can turn your dreams into reality. Do what you can, while you still can, so you do not look back on life and think, "I should have..." or "I could have..." It is never too late to accomplish your dreams and to be the person you might have been.
- **R is for Retire.** The concept of retirement has changed significantly over the years. The new retirement may involve contributing time and energy on a part-time or full-time basis. For many people, paid employment may be a necessity to make ends meet. Others may volunteer their time as a choice to remain active and engaged. Retirement may be the opportunity to focus time and talent on activities directly related to hobbies and interests. Whatever retirement looks like to you, using your time and energy for either paid or volunteer work can provide a sense of purpose, contribution and connectedness.
- **E is for Encourage.** Many older people choose to direct attention to their children and grandchildren. Increased availability and flexibility often provides older adults the time to engage and encourage younger generations. Share the wisdom you have gained over the years from trial, error and living, and encourage the ones you love. Share in life. Talk about things that matter most and that will leave a lasting legacy.
- **A is for Adjust.** Aging is a process of gradual change over time. While the sequence of change is similar, the rate at which we experience physical and cognitive changes tend to be quite individual often based on lifestyle choices, genetics, and environmental factors. Many people face limitations that can make day-to-day living activities challenging. Older adults often face choices, such as how to cope with a chronic illness, when to stop driving, when to engage the support of family or professional caregivers to help with independently living and personal care, and more.
- **M is for Manage.** Maintaining control and managing one's own life tends to be important, especially for a generation known for its independence and self-sufficiency. Often maintaining control over life involves sharing your wishes with family members and friends. It is much easier for family and friends to honor one's wishes when they know what his or her wishes are. Therefore, we encourage older adults to write down and share their wishes with people who could be called upon to provide care or make decisions on their behalf. Also, seek the counsel of trusted advisors to make informed choices, manage assets and expenditures, and maximize quality of life.

Mary Doepke, Owner of Home Helpers in Western Springs says, "At Home Helpers we know that every life matters. We strive to Make Life Easier® for older adults and their family. From occasional help around the house, to around the clock care, we offer the services and support older adults often need to maintain their independence and reach for their dreams. Our hope is to provide the care and support our greatest generation needs and deserves, while at the same time honoring our clients' wishes and celebrating their lives."

## IDEAS & SUGGESTIONS

### *Making the Most of Mother's Day*

Next month we celebrate Mother's Day; a time in which family gathers to honor and thank mom for her love, encouragement and dedication. It is often at holiday gathering when families are together for extended periods, that health-related changes due to aging or illness are noticed. Whether planning ahead or already providing assistance, you may find the following tips offered by Mary Doepke of Home Helpers to be helpful.

Ask your parents...

- to share their wishes about care, ideally before they find themselves facing an adverse health-related event.
- to share their expectations of family members in terms of roles and responsibilities should they need assistance.
- to share their fears and concerns about growing old or becoming ill.
- if they have purchased or considered purchasing long-term care insurance to help pay for care.

With adult children often taking on the role of family caregiver or care coordinator, and providing financially for their parents' care, there is value in being prepared. If parents are reluctant to share their thoughts or accept your attempts to offer a helping hand, Mary Doepke offers a couple of recommendations:

- Express your concerns in a kind and gentle way. For example, you might say "Mom, please let me know what your wishes are should you reach a point in life when care or assistance may become necessary. I can only honor your wishes if I know what they are."
- Encourage your loved ones to proactively seek care and assistance. For example, you might say "Mom, I wish you would make a choice now instead of waiting for a crisis to occur and then having a choice made for you."

### *Caregiving Tip*

Caregiving has fast become an expected life event, just like getting married, having children, working and retiring. What begins as a kind gesture, often leads to more routine care. While people providing assistance to a loved one may not consider themselves as caregivers, the involvement of family and friends can be invaluable to loved ones who are older or ill.

When called upon to provide care, much of the assistance focuses on activities of daily living (ADLs). As the name suggests, ADLs are those things which people engage in on a daily basis. These activities are basic to caring for one's self and maintaining independence. There are two types of ADL care. One focuses on independent living and the other focuses on personal care.

- Independent Living (referred to as Instrumental activities of daily living – IADLs) activities have to do with preparing meals, managing money (writing checks, paying bills), shopping for groceries or personal items, maintaining a residence, performing housework (e.g. laundry, cleaning), taking medications, using a telephone, handling mail, and traveling by car or public transportation.
- Personal Care (referred to as Activities of daily living – ADLs) involves activities such as bathing (sponge, bath or shower), getting dressed, getting in or out of bed or a chair (also called transferring), using the toilet, eating, and getting around or walking.

# HAPPENINGS & HOPE

## COMMUNITY CALENDAR



The following is a listing of local resources that may be of value to older adults and their families.

The Southwest Suburban Center on Aging—  
111 West Harris, La Grange (708-354-1323)

Interfaith Community Partners—315 N. La  
Grange Rd. La Grange Park (708-482-6597)

Alzheimer's Association (800-272-3900)

Western Springs Senior Drop-In Center—  
4211 Grand Avenue (708-246-3299)

AgeOptions—1048 Lake St. Suite 300, Oak  
Park (800-699-9043)

American Cancer Society (708-484-8541)

Senior Transportation in Lyons Township  
(708-354-0292)

Senior Health Insurance Program (SHIP) 800-  
548-9034

Illinois Department on Aging (Senior Helpline  
800-252-8966)

## BENEFITS AND GIFTS OF AGE

Though each stage of life presents challenges and opportunities, the benefits of aging are rarely explored and seldom appreciated. Our perspective of older people and the aging process shapes our view of aging as a blessing or a curse, a privilege or a detriment, or somewhere in between. Growing old and maintaining a desirable quality of life is truly a gift. Older adults enjoy growth and development opportunities that are equal in value to those of younger people and that should be respected. The tapestry of life for older adults reflects a richness that comes only from years of experience.

The following are some favorite quotes on the benefits and gifts of aging compiled over the years of working with older adults. After all, nobody knows aging better than older adults themselves.

- ✓ **WISDOM** – “Knowledge is not necessarily about being wise. You do not get wisdom just by growing old. Wisdom comes from years of trial, error, and living.” *(82-year-old retiree)*
- ✓ **TIME** – “I’ve been fortunate in life, now it’s time to give back” *(102-year-old volunteer at a local Senior Center)*
- ✓ **FREEDOM** – “To be and do what I want...The older I get, the less I feel I have to prove anything to anybody.” *(69-year-old retired teacher)*
- ✓ **MATURITY** – “Living to be old has its ups and downs. You have to be ready for anything. It either kills you or makes you strong”. *(98-year-old farmer’s wife)*

Noted physician and author, Dr. Andrew Weil devotes an entire chapter in his book, *Healthy Aging*, to explore “The Value of Aging.” He uses well-known, everyday images such as antiques, cheese, beef, violins, and wine as symbols of the value of aging. His point is that as we age, “I’m not getting older, I’m getting better!”

## CONTACT INFORMATION



Serving the Western Suburbs

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### HOME HELPERS – *Making Life Easier*<sup>™</sup>

Home Helpers' offers personalized care services similar to the care and support that is often provided by family members. We tailor our services and schedules to address our clients' needs.

Home Helpers begins with a consultation, preferably at the care recipient's residence. This gives us the opportunity...

- To meet the client and assess the situation.
- To make sure the requested services can be properly and safely performed.
- To ensure the caregiver(s) assigned possesses the personality, skill set and passion that best meet your loved one's needs.

Home Helpers' experienced and compassionate caregivers are bonded, insured and thoroughly screened. Our caregivers are employees, not subcontractors, thereby minimizing client liability.

To learn more about Home Helpers give us a call at 708-783-1220 or visit us on the web at [MaryandMikeCare.com](http://MaryandMikeCare.com). All offices independently owned and operated.

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