



In Care of You

A newsletter for Caregivers from Greene County Council on Aging

April 2023

Self-Neglect in the Elderly

What Is Elder Self-Neglect?

The U.S. Department of Health & Human Services defines elder self-neglect as “behavior of an elderly person that threatens his/her own health or safety and generally manifests itself by failure to provide himself/herself with adequate food, water, clothing, shelter, personal hygiene, medication (when indicated), and safety precautions.”

Self-neglect is more prevalent among isolated seniors. Self-neglect is considered one of the most common forms of elder abuse — although it is a kind of self-abuse. Self-neglect is associated with a significant increase in premature death and is associated with an increased risk for other types of elder abuse.

Signs of Self-Neglect in Elderly Individuals

- Inability to accomplish activities such as bathing, toileting, dressing, eating, grooming, mobility.
- Loss of ability to prep meals, use telephone, take medications, keep house, manage finances.
- Symptoms of depression and or confusion
- Excessive drinking or drug use
- Signs of poor hygiene in both self-care and physical surroundings
- Indicators that a senior is not getting care for problems with eyesight, hearing, dental issues, incontinence, etc.
- Frequent falls

- Signs of poor physical health, such as weight loss, dehydration, poor medication adherence, etc.
- Unpaid bills and utility disconnects.

Self-Neglect Interventions Can Be Difficult

It is important to remember that competent older adults can make hazardous lifestyle choices freely and without intervention as long as they are not causing immediate harm to other people. If an elder is found to be lacking decisional capacity or their circumstances are severe enough, Adult Protective Services may get involved. However, exact APS policies and practices vary between states and counties.

The Right to Refuse Care

Self-neglectors with higher levels of cognitive and physical function may refuse suggested interventions by health care professionals and social services agencies.

Even if a self-neglecting senior doesn't “officially” require outside care yet, it's important to keep a close eye on the situation. Illnesses or conditions that follow a progressive pattern, such as Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia, Parkinson's disease, depression, or addiction, may lead to a gradual loss of ability to or interest in self-care. Sadly, as a neglectful situation deteriorates, it may take more than one APS report, a major medical setback or some other kind of emergency to instigate a full intervention and get an elder the help they need.

Adapted from agingcare.com article by Anne-Marie Botek



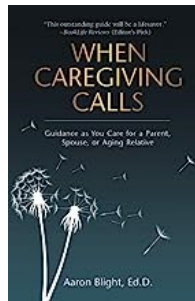
In Care of You

Providing support for those who support others

Recommended Reading

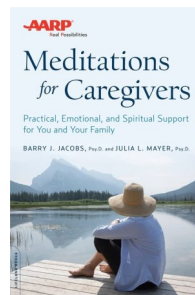
When Caregiving Calls: Guidance as You Care for a Parent, Spouse, or Aging Relative by Aaron Blight

A caregiver shares his insights in brief, thoughtful chapters that examine the many facets of caregiving.



AARP Meditations for Caregivers: Practical, Emotional, and Spiritual Support for You and Your Family by Barry J Jacobs

Book blends emotional and spiritual motivation to minimize the strains while helping caregivers view their work as a mission from the heart.



Available at Greene County Public Library and at booksellers.

Online Support Group Discontinued

We no longer have the option for the online Caregivers Support Group. You are invited to one of the in-person groups (listed below). Individuals are always welcome to call the Council if you need support.

Support Groups

- 1st & 3rd Mondays of the month at 6pm, First Presbyterian Church, 314 Xenia Ave, Yellow Springs
- 1st Tuesday of month at 11:30 am, GCCOA Xenia office
- 2nd & 4th Tuesdays at 9:30 am, Peace Lutheran Church, 3530 Dayton-Xenia Rd, Beaver Creek

Weekly Radio Segment: Partners in Caregiving every Thursday soon after 6pm, WBZI—FM 100.3 AM 1500

Could You Benefit from a Caregiver's Support Group?

One of the main benefits of caregiver support groups is that they provide much-needed social support. Group members validate each other's experiences. It's a relief to know that what you're going through is normal and that you're not the only one with these feelings – negative or positive.

Support groups are also a great place to ask for advice, find out about useful resources, or vent frustrations. You won't have to worry about judgement or confusion from non-caregivers since everyone is going through similar circumstances.

7 benefits of caregiver support groups:

- Feeling less lonely, isolated or judged; getting connection and support;
- Reducing depression, anxiety, or distress;
- Gaining a sense of empowerment and control
- Getting advice or information about practical solutions or treatment options;
- Improving or learning healthy coping skills;
- Getting a better understanding of what to expect in the future;
- Improving caregiving skills and giving better quality of life to your older adult.

We'd love to see you at a Support Group!