



June, 2014



### **Not a Well Person**

I haven't felt very well for the past 4 weeks (much like that little green face above) . . . achy, then a bronchial congestion with 3 days of fever. Then the congestion went to my head, and a trip to the doctor was in order. After the antibiotic and cough syrup, though, I just couldn't bounce back after I got over the congestion. I was extremely tired, took naps once or twice a day (which is so unnatural for me), and was so very short of breath. I barely could walk to the mailbox without feeling out of breath. I decided to go to my doctor again who heard a heart murmur which I never had before. After wearing a heart monitor for 24 hours, I was scheduled for an echocardiogram with stress test. I failed that test miserably and was scheduled for a heart catheterization a week later. Talk about a huge surprise!!

The heart cath showed that I have mild heart disease, plus my blood pressure was greatly elevated. With meds and more info from my doctor, I'm sure I'll be better soon.

Why am I telling you this? As a former caregiver I understand the importance of taking care of yourself. We always put our loved one first, then maybe ourselves. No! When your body tells you that something isn't right, be sure to have it checked out. Don't wait around. **Your loved one is counting on you!**



### **Go Ahead, Have a Good Cry – 5 Reasons Why It's Good for You**

Researchers have proven what many caregivers have already figured out on their own: sometimes there's nothing like a good cry to make you feel better.

Neuroscientist and tear researcher Dr. William Frey, PhD, director of the Alzheimer's Research Center at Regions Hospital in St. Paul Minnesota, has been studying the effects of crying for the past 15 years.

Research shows:

- 85% of women and 73% of men felt less sad and angry after crying
- On average, women cry 47 times a year, men cry 7 times a year
- Crying bouts last 6 minutes on average
- Tears are more often shed between 7 and 10 pm

According to Frey, crying is not only a human response to sorrow and frustration, it's a healthy one. Crying is a natural way to reduce emotional stress that, left unchecked, has negative physical effects on the body, including increasing the risk of cardiovascular disease and other stress-related disorders.

1. **Crying Relieves Stress** – Because unalleviated stress can increase our risk for heart attack and damage certain areas of our brain, the human ability to cry has survival value.
2. **Crying Lowers Blood Pressure** – Crying has been found to lower blood pressure and pulse rate immediately following therapy sessions during which they cried and raged.
3. **Tears Remove Toxins** – In addition, Frey says tears actually remove toxins from the body. Tears may be removing chemicals that build up during emotional stress.
4. **Crying Reduces “Manganese”** – The simple act of crying also reduces the body's manganese level, a mineral which affects mood and is found in up to 30 times greater concentration in tears than in blood serum.
5. **Emotional Crying Means You're Human** – While the eyes of all mammals are moistened and soothed by tears, only human beings shed tears in response to emotional stress.

AgingCare.com, MediaBrains Inc., 2011



## Quick and Easy Snack Foods

Tired? Hungry? What is your first choice? Did I hear you say **chocolate??!!** Perhaps, as long as it is dark chocolate and with a proper amount. We are all going to be tired at one time or another and want to feed our hunger, but with no energy you often won't make the best choices.

Have nutritious snacks on hand for those times when our batteries are running low. Some examples of healthy snacks would be keeping fresh fruit on hand, protein bars, almonds, pistachios, yogurt (Greek yogurt has more protein), veggies w/low fat dip.

Keep your snacks low in sugar and high in protein. I personally notice that when I get the “hungries”, if I don't eat protein, I can't get rid of that hungry feeling. I have to have protein or keep eating until I do!

Veggies are always a good snack and can make great casseroles, too. I recently fixed a scrumptious cauliflower casserole that I want to share with you.



### Smoked Gouda Cauliflower

1 head cauliflower, medium size  
6 oz. cream cheese, softened  
4 oz. smoked Gouda cheese, shredded  
¼ tsp coarse pepper  
Dash of salt  
(optional: chopped chives or green onion. I'm thinking you could add crumbled bacon on top also.)

Cut up cauliflower and steam until tender. Drain and mash with fork. Stir in creamed cheese, salt, and pepper while hot. Spray glass dish and spoon half of cauliflower in. Sprinkle with ½ of the shredded gouda cheese. Spoon rest of cauliflower, then top with the rest of the gouda cheese.

Bake 350 for 20-30 minutes. Serves 6. (190 calories per serving)



### **It's Spring – almost Summer – Time to Move!**

We Northerners need to get out and **MOVE** now that the weather is coming back! Sometimes that's difficult for caregivers because they don't want to leave their loved ones; however, even going outside and feeling the sun and breathing deeply is a health benefit. It lifts the spirit and refreshes your outlook for the challenges ahead. Enjoy a few minutes looking at the bird chirping in the pine tree, the chipmunk stopping to look around, or the ant crawling on a blade of grass. Feel the warmth, breathe in the season!



## Find Time in Your Calendar

Caregivers' calendars tend to be filled with appointments, meetings, and other household/work related activities. We also tend to add loved one's social and recreational activities to our calendars as we remain focused on keeping them active and engaged.

Meanwhile, caregivers can go for multiple weeks without participating in a preferred activity themselves. No wonder why it is so difficult and sometimes depressing when starting a new week.

Even when caregivers do manage to schedule and participate in an activity of choice for themselves they can often be filled with guilt. I can remember a number of times during my caregiving journey with my parents when I felt guilty during times I spent out of the house for leisure, learning, or recreation. When I felt guilty or thought about what was happening with my parents at home, I did not live in the moment and missed out on fully enjoying some activities.

Over time, I learned (through work with my own life coach) that taking time for myself was not selfish so there was no need to feel guilty. In fact, by fully participating in at least one enjoyable activity each week I refueled my caregiving energy and provided even better and more balanced support throughout the rest of the week. It is vital to always have things to look forward to in your calendar--this will help you stay more positive even when you face great challenges.

**Practice Tip :** Schedule one fun or preferred activity in your calendar to be completed within the next week. This does not need to be a major activity - it could be something as simple as spending time alone reading in a park, walking on a nearby beach or pond, going to a movie, etc. This will give you something to look forward to. When you participate in your activity, be fully present and enjoy it to the fullest. After you return from your activity, your loved one will benefit as you have much more positive energy for your caregiving support activities.

If you can, it would be nice to plan for and schedule at least one major activity during the summer travel season. Book a weekend or week away. If you do not want to leave your loved one or have concern with financial resources, just take a few day trips to refresh yourself.

This article just appeared in my email from A. Michael Bloom. How fitting for this time of year, but great info for all year for caregivers. I can't begin to tell you how important it is to refresh your mind periodically. Please try to find a way to refresh at least once during the week.



## Meditation

*Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. – Romans 12:13*

Hospitality: the act, practice, or quality of being hospitable, friendly.

I can see a relationship between hospitality and caregiving. Our loved one enjoys our being hospitable and releasing happy vibes. A smile on one's face is balm to another's spirit. A smile indicates all is right with the world. Even just walking around their room with a smile on your face putting away clothes or dusting the furniture gives a lift to their spirit.

Hospitality that comes directly from the heart is much more than simply a social nicety or a flair for relationship building. It is evidence that the Holy Spirit is at work, cleansing away the selfishness and sinfulness that lurks in the corners of our hearts. Sometimes these sins escape our notice, and so we ask our Lord to continue His "housekeeping" chores in our souls, not only forgiving us, but also cleansing us "from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

Thank you, Lord, for the smiles in my life. Help me give happy, friendly vibes to those around me without a hint of hesitation. Be with us as we continue to move forward through these challenging situations. In Jesus name, Amen.