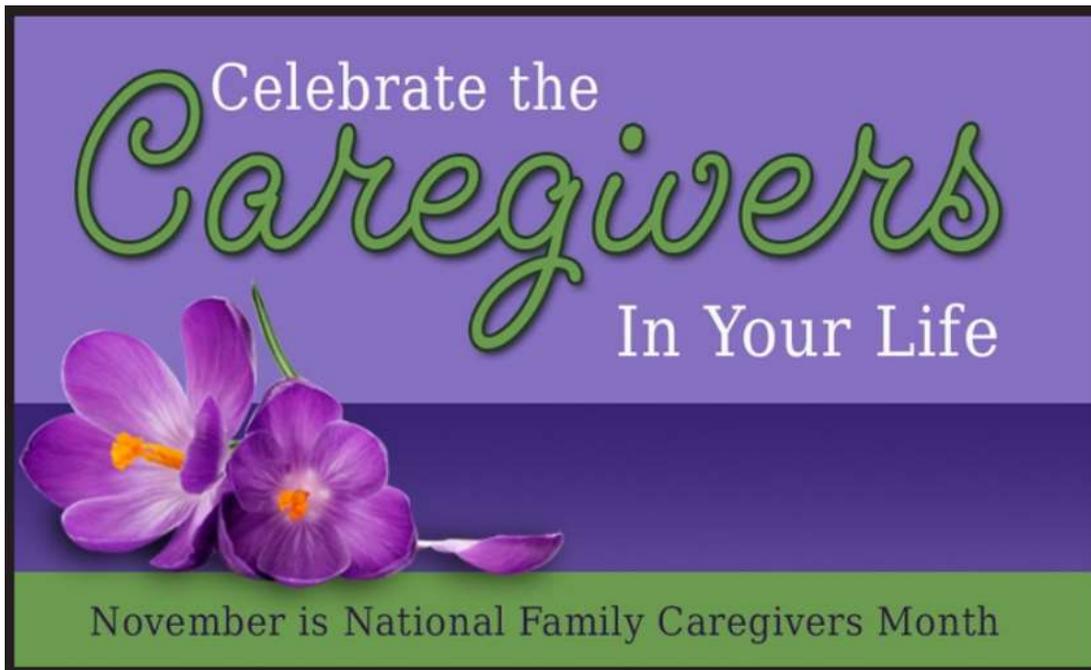


Celebrate Caregiving by Pledging to Care for Yourself



By Jane Mahoney, Caregiver Support Specialist, Greater Wisconsin Agency on Aging Resources

November is National Family Caregiver Month, a time to recognize the many hard working and devoted people who make it their mission to keep a loved one happy and safe. There are thousands of caregivers across Wisconsin who are selflessly putting their own lives on hold to make sure their loved ones are being cared for. But who will care for the caregiver? Ideally relatives, friends, and neighbors are there to help but in order to truly be a healthy caregiver, there must be a promise to care for oneself. The Family Caregiver Alliance laid the groundwork for caregivers to do just that. Please read A Caregiver's Pledge and take the pledge to not only care for your loved one, but to care for YOU.

A Caregiver's Pledge

1. I will understand that I can't care for anyone else if I also don't care for myself. I will keep an image in my mind of putting the oxygen mask on myself first.
2. I will remember that the only person I can change is myself. I cannot change my loved one who is ill, or my family members.
3. I will find opportunities to laugh, daily. These might come in movies, jokes, television, or with friends who can see the humor in my situation and remind me to do the same.

4. I will get away from my caregiving duties on a regular basis, even if it is just to walk around the block. But I will also find ways to have lunch with a friend, go to a movie, window shop, breathe in fresh air, watch the sunset, or eat a hot fudge sundae.

5. I will visit a support group, either online (wisconsin caregiver.org) or in person in my community, so that I know that I am not alone. If a support group isn't right for me, I will find a friend to talk to, call my family consultant, or attend a workshop.

6. I will learn as much as I can about my loved one's illness so I can better care for him or her with understanding. I will learn techniques that will make caregiving easier for both of us.

7. I will say "yes" when people offer to help. I will make a list of things they can do and post it on the refrigerator, so that when those offers come, I'll be ready. When there are not offers, I will ask for help, even though it might be hard to do so.

8. I will use community resources—such as Meals on Wheels, paratransit, day care programs, and volunteer respite programs—to help make my caregiving duties easier.

9. I will find something I really like to do and make sure I find time to do it on a regular basis. Just because I am a caregiver, doesn't mean I have to give up everything that is meaningful to me. I will read, knit, garden, scrapbook, do genealogy or woodworking for a designated period of time every week.

10. I will remember that I am loved and appreciated, even when my loved one can't tell me that. I will honor the nurturing, responsibility, caring and support that I provide to my loved one as a gift I give.

If you need information about local resources or have specific questions about your caregiving journey, please call your Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC).

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