

Ko'olau  
Caregiver  
Support  
Group

AUGUST 2008 ISSUE

# Newsletter

## KOOLAU CAREGIVERS SUPPORT GROUP

THIS NEWSLETTER  
IS PRODUCED BY  
THE CAREGIVER  
FOUNDATION  
IN CONJUNCTION  
WITH THE FIRST  
PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH OF  
HONOLULU

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### Advisory Council

We welcome your recommendations for individuals to service on the Advisory Committee for the Ko'olau Caregivers Support Group. Please submit names to Gary A. Powell at 625-3782 or by email at [thecaregiverfoundation@yahoo.com](mailto:thecaregiverfoundation@yahoo.com)  
Peter and Ann Millard  
Gary A. Powell  
Linda Roberts

We have passed the half-way mark in 2007 and now is the time to begin looking at 2008 and planning some of the changes that we can make during the next year.

As caregivers, we do not always have the opportunity to do things that help us individually. We are busy doing the day-to-day work of caring and finding time to take care of our own relationships with our children, spouses and friends and sometimes can find those relationships suffering as a result.

Let me suggest that you plan now to make 2009 the year during which you do find a way to keep relationships with family and friends healthy and meaningful. This may mean you have to ask for

help, for respite times and accept that the person helping you may not do the same job you would. Or it may be that you sit down with other direct family members and a long term care professional who can help you develop a plan to share the burdens more equitably. Or it may be looking into the care a professional care facility may be able to provide.

A portion of the stress in caregiving is sometimes rooted in our unwillingness to let go and let someone else help. Start planning now for a better 2009. Ask for advice from your friends at our Ko'olau Caregivers Support Group!!

*Gary A. Powell*



**Next Meeting  
September 4  
7-9 PM**

**Tips for dealing with  
Dementia**

First Presbyterian Church  
Ko'olau Golf Course  
Fireside Room

## GETTING OLD CAN GET YOU DOWN!

At our last Support Group Meeting we looked at the issues involved in Geriatric depression. Understanding the signs and knowing some of the causes helps us as caregivers to find the right kind of help.



Depression can be the re-

sult of medications, lack of social contact, a physical ailment, physical or mental abuse, a brain chemical imbalance—in other words, we need to take it seriously and find support.

While we can't do much about getting older but we don't have to get sad as well— Ask for help for yourself or your loved

(cont. from pg 1)

one. A good place to start is with a physician who specializes in geriatric conditions. He may recommend your loved one have a complete mental health evaluation. This is usually done in a hospital setting over a period of days. Then, recommendations on diet, exercise, social contact, medications and possible therapy can be tailored appropriately. For your own health—the Support Group is a good starting point.

### WHO IS BEHIND THE KOOLAU CAREGIVERS SUPPORT GROUP?

This support group meets at the First Presbyterian Church at the Ko'olau Golf Course. It is facilitated and promoted by The Caregiver Foundation, a registered Hawaii non-profit whose mission is the establishment of Caregiver Support Groups and the production and dissemination of Caregiving educational materials.

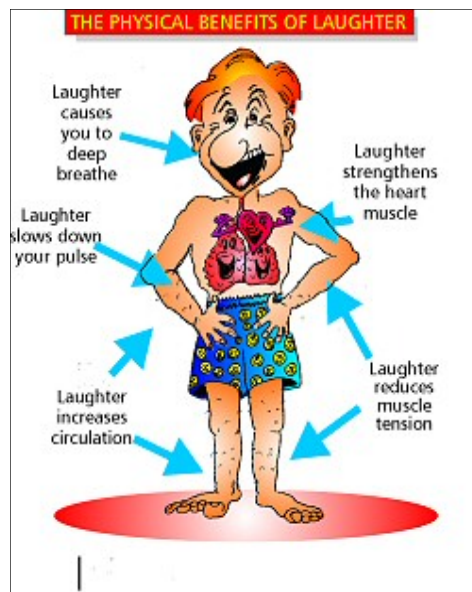
The Group is open to anyone involved in caregiving. There are no fees. Various speakers are invited to share in areas of expertise and each meeting features a time of sharing for those who would like to share experiences or ask others for advice and help. Each meeting has a facilitator and participants are reminded that information shared at meetings is private and remains within the Group.

For more information contact Gary A. Powell at 808-625-3782 or email [thecaregiverfoundation@yahoo.com](mailto:thecaregiverfoundation@yahoo.com)

**Caregiver Support Groups provide a forum to address these and many others areas of concern for caregivers. Involve yourself in a support group and you will find your journey a little easier and the ability to care for a loved one improved.**

### SHARING THE LOAD

Being able to share experiences, heartaches, frustrations... that is what our Caregiver Support Group is all about. Learning from each other and from visiting experts combined with a safe and private setting helps make



### HAVE A LAUGH! (OR THREE...)

At a recent Caregiver support group meeting, a participant mentioned how funny it was to have suddenly become the father to his 83 year old Dad.

*"If I just dwell on the difficulty of this task, I'll go crazy— but when I stop and look at things, a whole bunch of them are actually pretty funny. I mean here I am telling my old man what to do—and guess what? He usually does it! I can only wonder if he remembers my reaction to his telling me what to do"*

Caregiving is a tough job—but find moments that make you smile and even better, look for things to make you laugh. You will feel better and so will the person for whom you are caring.

### RECOGNIZE THE WARNING SIGNS OF CAREGIVER BURNOUT

- Withdrawal from other family members and close friends; refusing invitations to dinner, a night out, etc.; staying at home much of the time.
- Giving up favorite pastimes and hobbies.
- Feeling irritable, helpless or depressed; crying suddenly and/or for no apparent reason.
- Getting angry or frustrated more easily/quickly; taking out frustrations on others.
- Gaining or losing a significant amount of weight.
- Getting ill more often.

Plan Now  
Hawaii Caregivers  
Conference  
Saturday Nov. 1,  
2008  
Sheraton Waikiki 8-3  
Keynote = Dr. Bill  
Thomas  
Call—768-7709  
for more information

## CARING FOR A LOVED ONE WITH MENTAL ILLNESS

If someone you love has mental illness, it is important for you, your loved one, and your loved one's healthcare team to work together. You may also want to get other members of your family involved. Learn all you can about your loved one's illness, and understand coping techniques and tips. Healthcare professionals may be able to offer suggestions and tips on how to control frustration, clearly communicate with your loved one, set boundaries, and more.

Mental illness can be disabling for your loved one, especially during an episode of depression, mania, or psychotic behavior. While these episodes are occurring, you may also benefit from professional healthcare assistance.

The following suggestions may help you on a day-to-day basis while caring for someone with mental illness.

- **Identify reasonable and obtainable goals.** Setting expectations too high sets everyone up for stress and failure. Encourage and recognize progress, even if it is less than what was hoped for. Goals for some people may be taking a course at school or part-time volunteer work; for others, an achievable goal may be getting out of bed and coming to the dinner table.
- **Learn to reduce stress.** Stress is a normal part of life, and as a caregiver, you may experience higher levels of stress because of your responsibilities. Your loved one may not be able to interpret your stress as some-

thing apart from them or their behavior—and they may not be able to handle your stress.

Stress may make people with mental illness vulnerable to relapse. It is important as a caregiver to take steps to reduce your own stress as well as provide direction to your loved



one on ways to reduce their stress.

- **Talk to each other and to the healthcare team.** Communication is important if you're going to work together.
- **Be encouraging and supportive.** A critical, over-involved, or overprotective attitude may be threatening to people who are ill and may undermine their confidence.
- **Learn problem-solving techniques.** It's important that people be able to solve their own problems. However, you can all work together to identify problems and possible solutions.
- **Be sensitive.** Avoid comparisons to friends, colleagues, or family members. Other people's success at work, school, or in their social lives may only worsen demoralization.
- **Encourage compliance in taking medication.** Families should encourage loved ones to follow the clinician's instructions regarding their medica-

tion. Without nagging or criticism, you can help them remember to take their medication by pointing out how much they have accomplished.

### How You Can Help Yourself

Caring for someone with mental illness takes a good deal of energy, balance, and hard work. You may need to constantly juggle schedules, make and keep medical appointments, keep track of medications, and more—not to mention the emotional toll. It can be a day-in, day-out grind ...without a day off. As the days fill up, it's important to remember to schedule some time for yourself, as impossible as that may seem.

Here are some simple steps you can take to recharge:

- Call a friend
- Go for a long walk
- Curl up with a book
- Rent a favorite video
- Take a hot bath
- Have a massage
- Write a letter
- Listen to your favorite music

Take 10 minutes to do whatever you like best



Avoid relapse by knowing the early signs. If you notice your loved one losing interest in things, becoming increasingly depressed, having difficulty concentrating, withdrawing socially, having difficulty making decisions, having sleep problems, feeling overcommitted or over expansive, or if you notice other feelings or actions unique to your loved one, call the clinician immediately. Getting professional help early enough may prevent a relapse.

## Depression Symptoms

**D** – A sad or **Depressed** affect (the impression a person makes) along with a lack of interest in joy in what once would have been pleasurable

**S** – **Sleep** disturbance or lack of sexual desire

**I** – Lack of **Interest** in activities

**G** – **Guilt**, in excess, or feelings of worthlessness or of being no good

**E** – Loss of **Energy**

**C** – Lack of **Concentration**

**A** – Loss of **Appetite**

**P** – “**Lead**en **Paralysis**” or profound fatigue of a sort that one sees in patients with Parkinson's Disease; or they can become agitated, angry or even hostile

**S** – **Suicidal** thoughts or plans. The person may say, “I wish I were dead. I am a burden”

Visit ARCHIVE for past meeting notes  
WWW

Ko'olan Caregiver Support Group  
95-099 Lanaki Pl.  
Mililani, HI 96789

Pass this along to \_\_\_\_\_

## ON-LINE RESOURCES FOR CAREGIVERS

CCGS does not endorse any of these organizations.  
This information is provided for your resource use only.

### Arthritis Assistance

<http://allaboutarthritis.com>

Information about types of arthritis, pain management, treatment options, FAQs and personal tools.

### Care Giving Community

<http://www.eldersearch.com>

Support for caregivers and information available in your areas. A good site for problem solving and geriatric care.

### Benefits for Seniors

<http://www.benefitcheckup.org>

Service that identifies federal and state assistance for your particular situation.

### Senior Store

<http://www.seniorstore.com>

On-line store includes: clothing, books, video, music and nostalgia. Also featured, household items, gift baskets and more. A unique shopping site.

### Senior Housing Net

<http://www.seniorhousing.net>

A comprehensive guide to retirement communities, assisted living residences, Alzheimer's facilities and nursing homes nationwide.

### Transitions, Inc.

<http://www.asktransitions.com/index.html>

Elder Care consulting - tips and tools, family resources services.

### Administration on Aging

<http://www.aoa.dhhs.gov/aoa/webres/craig.htm>

A directory of web sites on aging.

### The Gerontology Foundation

<http://www.healthandage.com>

Interactive center between the public and the professionals.

### Access America for Seniors

<http://www.seniors.gov>

News magazine reporting on the issues of aging.

### Administration on Aging

<http://www.aoa.gov>

Sites on Adult Day Services, Ageism, Assisted Living and much more.

### Indiana Association for Home Care, Inc.

[http://www.ind-homecare.org/pages/independent\\_living.html](http://www.ind-homecare.org/pages/independent_living.html)

A Guide to Independent Living.

### Administration on Aging

<http://www.aoa.dhhs.gov/elderpage.html>

Extensive information for Older Persons and their families.

### Dr. Koop

<http://www.drkoop.com>

Former Surgeon General provides a medical community on line.

### American Association of Retired Persons

<http://www.aarp.org>

Advice from the nationally-known agency.

### Seniors Site

<http://www.seniors-site.com/index.html>

Message boards for illness, pets, drugs, housing and more.

### Life Extension Foundation

<http://www.lef.org>

Information on medical discoveries and research.

### Meals on Wheels

<http://www.projectmeal.org>

Information on the Meals on Wheels closest to your area.

### Homecare Online

<http://www.nahc.org>

Extensive guide to home care and hospices, advice on how to choose an agency.

### Elder Care Resource

[EldercareHawaii.com](http://www.eldercarehawaii.com)

Web based information portal— Tries to coordinate timely information and act as a central site for Hawaii-based Care groups.

### Senior Resources

<http://www.seniorresource.com>

Resources by state, retirement, finance, insurance and care.

### National Alliance for Care Giving

<http://www.caregiving.org>

### Care Guide

<http://www.careguide.net>

Personal care giving resource for directories, articles, newsletters, tools and more.

### Age Page

<http://www.agepage.com>

Caregiver's resource guide and lots of information.

### Senior Options

<http://www.senioroptions.com>

Free guide to senior services including living facilities, care centers, home health services, and hospices everywhere in the USA. Listed by state and city.

### Estronaut

[http://www.estronaut.com/a/elderly\\_mental\\_health.htm](http://www.estronaut.com/a/elderly_mental_health.htm)

Mental health concerns in the elderly.

### Web MD

<http://www.webmd.com>

The online doctor is IN.

**Catholic Charities Hawaii—Community Services for Hawaii.**

<http://www.CatholicCharitiesHawaii.org>