



# Keeping In Touch

Spring 2001

News For Family Caregivers

## Caring For an Aging Loved One Series

Meeting someone who truly understands what you're going through can be an invaluable source of support. DARTS brings you and other caregivers together to discuss concerns with knowledgeable professionals and to learn from the real experts – you. DARTS service coordinators lead this free series. The same weekly sessions will be offered in South St. Paul on Tuesdays and Lakeville on Wednesdays between April 3 and May 2.

**Residence of South St. Paul**  
744 19th Ave. North, South St. Paul  
Tuesdays, 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM  
April 3 - May 1

**Lakeville Senior Center**  
20732 Holt Ave., Lakeville  
Wednesdays, 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM  
April 4 - May 2

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|-----------------|---|
| April 3 and 4   | Caregiver Issues:<br>Risks and Benefits |
| April 10 and 11 | Understanding<br>Memory Loss            |
| April 17 and 18 | Handling Anger<br>and Guilt             |
| April 24 and 25 | Legal and<br>Financial Issues           |
| May 1 and 2     | Community<br>Services for<br>Caregivers |

Participants can attend any or all sessions in the series, but attending all will provide a more helpful support experience. DARTS may be able to arrange for a volunteer to stay with your family member while you attend a session. Please call Vicky at DARTS to register, 651-455-1560.

## Breathe Deeply – It Will Lift Your Health and Spirits

"Take a deep breath and relax." Sounds familiar, yet how many of us really know how to relax or take a deep breath? Because caregivers often juggle the demands of careers, caring for seniors, and personal lives, the idea of taking time to relax may seem impossible. Short breaks and deep breathing can relax you, improve your health, and give you more energy.

**Deep breathing** – To begin, put on loose-fitting clothing. Lie flat on your back without a pillow under your head (although you may place a small pillow under your knees to relax your lower back). Exhale completely, then place one hand on your abdomen and one hand in the center of your chest over your heart. Slowly draw air in through your nose. Feel your diaphragm (the muscles and connective tissues separating your chest and abdomen) expand as your breath enters the lower part of your lungs. As you draw in a deeper breath, you'll feel your chest rise as air fills the upper part of your lungs. Slowly exhale through your nose, contracting your abdomen slightly to fully empty your lungs. Repeat three to five times, deepening your breath each time.

Sit up slowly to avoid feeling light-headed. After practicing this exercise for a few days, any light-headedness should pass. Take your time and you will find deep breathing relaxing and soothing. For people who are tense, stressed, or worried, practicing deep breathing before bedtime can lead to a better night's sleep. Once you've learned how to breathe completely, you can do so in any position – standing, sitting, or lying down. Now, hold it. (CAUTION: If you have high blood pressure, glaucoma, or heart or cerebral problems, avoid holding your breath.)

Once you feel comfortable with breathing deeply and fully, you can practice holding your breath. Inhale deeply for five counts, hold your breath for five counts, and exhale slowly for five counts. Maintain awareness of your breath and of how your body feels. Repeat three to five times. Adjust your breathing to your comfort level. If it feels too difficult to inhale for five counts and hold your breath for five counts, try three counts. As you increase the capacity of your lungs, you can move up to five counts.

**Finding Peace** – The key to a fulfilling life is to live consciously in our bodies. Then we can live life to the fullest, respecting and nurturing ourselves. When we are at peace, we have more to give to ourselves and to others. That's when we can create peace in our worlds, in our relationships, and within ourselves.

Article adapted from *Love, Medicine and Miracles*, by Bernie Siegel

## *may we help you?*

### **Sharing your home may be the answer**

A caregiver in Apple Valley says, "The DARTS Home Share Program was the answer." She cared for her husband with dementia and had some extra space in their home. What she needed was some help with chores and some respite for herself. She was matched with a college student who moved into her home and helped with her caregiving and some household chores. It was a lifeline for her during a stressful time.

The Home Share Program is a creative alternative that links homeowners with renters seeking affordable housing.

#### **Homeowners interested in this option may:**

- have more space in their home than they need
- want some help maintaining their home
- be uneasy living alone
- need additional income.

A requirement of Home Share is that one of the individuals must be 55 or older, physically or developmentally disabled, or head of a single parent family. The Home Share staff screen the homeowners and renters for compatibility and work with both parties to ensure a good arrangement. Background checks, references, and a small registration fee are required.

**For more information on Home Share** in Dakota County, contact Kathy Wickner at DARTS, 651-234-2252, on a Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday.

## *give me a break!*

Lynn Cibuzar, DARTS Service Coordinator

As someone who meets many caregivers, I have gathered some advice I want to share. But, I know that unsolicited advice is the last thing some caregivers want, so let's call it "gentle reminders" instead!

A Mel Brooks quote is especially useful to caregivers: "Hope for the best. Plan for the worst. Life is a play. We're unrehearsed."

Caregivers need to know there are no rules to this game; there are no "shoulds." There are only things that work for a given family, in a given situation. After the fact, you may wonder if there was a better way to approach your situation. Everyone does better with hindsight. Experience helps, but experience is something you don't gain until after you've needed it. You need to realize that you made the best decision you could at the time.



Check this out!  
DARTS recently launched a web site for family caregivers of seniors.

The site  
– [www.caregiverMN.org](http://www.caregiverMN.org) –  
offers to-the-point information about common caregiving issues, confidential e-mail communication with a DARTS advisor, recommended resources and web sites, and a bulletin board to share experiences and questions.

### **Save this Outing Date**

On May 23 DARTS will be offering a **Day Away for Caregivers** at the Franciscan Retreat House in Prior Lake from 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. More details to follow, but keep the date open! It will be a marvelous way to gain some perspective and fellowship!

*If you do not want to receive this newsletter, call DARTS at 651-455-1560 and ask to have your name removed from the Keeping In Touch mailing list.*