New Year’s Resolutions for Caregivers

Senior Helpers stresses the importance of taking care of yourself while caring for others

(December 2012) – Caregivers of the elderly are often sandwiched with responsibility, caring for an aging relative while at the same time caring for their own children and their spouse. So it’s no wonder they often forget to take care of themselves! A year can go by without a caregiver making it to a restaurant, a doctor, or even a hairdresser for a much-needed haircut. And to top it off, caregivers may rarely hear a “thank you” for all their hard work because seniors are often in emotional and physical pain and don’t understand the sacrifice caregivers make to take care of them.

That’s why Senior Helpers, one of the largest in-home care companies in the nation, with a location in your area, is raising awareness about the importance of New Year’s Resolutions for Caregivers – not only to benefit caregivers’ mental and physical health, but also to ultimately improve their care of the elderly.

“The New Year is a good time, psychologically, for caregivers to make resolutions to adjust how they feel about their caregiving responsibilities,” says Peter Ross, co-founder of Senior Helpers, a national in-home care company with highly trained caregivers specializing in dementia and Alzheimer’s care. “Often, caregivers get lost in the day-to-day duties of helping others and forget to take care of their own basic needs. That’s why we encourage caregivers of the elderly to take care of themselves so they can ultimately provide better care. And at some point, caregivers may need to bring in outside help so they get a much needed break.”

Senior Helpers’ Top 10 Caregiving Resolutions:

1. Take “You” Time Every Day – Make a commitment, every single day, to take five, 10, or 15 minutes to do at least one thing you enjoy or need, such as meditating or listening to music.
2. Keep Preventive Care Appointments – It’s important to make and not skip regular doctor appointments (and see the doctor if you’re sick). You can’t give good care if you’re sick, plus you can pass on your illness.
3. **Create a Family Support Group** – Create a support group of loved ones who provide you with emotional and physical support. The bigger your community circle, the stronger you and your senior will become as a unit.

4. **Make Time to Exercise** – Studies show that exercise is a great way to relieve stress and to feel refreshed again! If you can’t get motivated to exercise on your own, find an exercise buddy who can help you stick to your commitment of better health.

5. **Get Enough Rest** – Find ways to ensure that you get at least seven or eight hours of sleep. Your body and mind need an adequate amount of time to rest each night so you can feel rejuvenated each morning for your caregiving responsibilities.

6. **Be Kind to Yourself** – It’s okay to make mistakes. Learn to shake off feelings of guilt or self-criticism that you aren’t doing all you can to help your senior. It’s important to remind yourself daily that you’re doing the best you can.

7. **Give Thanks** – When a friend or family member spends time with the elderly loved one you’re caring for, send them a quick thank you note. It’ll encourage them to help more in the year ahead.

8. **Learn about Local Resources** – Many caregivers don’t take advantage of support available right in their own town. In difficult times, it’s important to have resources you can reach out to immediately to help you cope.

9. **Delegate** – Write a list of activities that would help you the most throughout the New Year. Hand out your “Caregiver’s Resolutions for Family and Friends” to anyone who can help make your life easier.

10. **Think about what your senior would want for you** – It’s easy for caregivers to get lost in their daily responsibilities. Take time each day to remember that the senior is also dealing with feelings of losing their independence or dealing with an illness. Remember who they really are inside and the good things your senior would want for you.

“At some point, caregivers may need to shed the guilt and realize they have to bring in outside help, especially with elderly loved ones with Alzheimer’s or dementia,” says Ross. “Our Senior Helpers caregivers are highly skilled with training through our program called Senior Gems®. It’s important to meet with one of these caregivers to learn how you can work together to make life more pleasant as the senior goes through each stage of the disease.”

**We can provide local senior care experts and caregivers to talk about their Caregiving Resolutions for 2013. It’s a great piece to kick off the New Year!**

*Sources: Assist Guide Information Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*
To learn more about how to care for your senior loved one with dementia or Alzheimer’s through the Senior Gems® program, please visit our website at www.seniorhelpers.com. There you can also request a complimentary Senior Gems® DVD.

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**Fast Facts About Caregiving:**

- Caregivers say they do not go to the doctor because:
  - 67% say they put their family’s needs first
  - 57% say they put the care recipient’s needs over their own
  - 51% say they do not have time to take care of themselves
  - 49% say they are too tired to do so (National Alliance for Caregiving (NAC), 2004).
- The majority of caregivers (83%) are family caregivers—unpaid persons such as family members, friends, and neighbors of all ages who are providing care for a relative (Family Caregiver Alliance (FCA), 2005)
- 35% of caregivers report difficulty finding time for themselves (NAC, 2004).
- More than 34 million unpaid caregivers provide care to someone age 18 and older who is ill or has a disability (AARP, 2008).
- Half (53%) of caregivers who said their health had gotten worse due to caregiving also said the decline in their health has affected their ability to provide care (NAC, 2006).
- The vast majority (87%) of individuals with Alzheimer’s disease are cared for at home by family members (Alzheimer’s Association, 2009).

**About Senior Helpers:**

Senior Helpers connects professional caregivers with seniors who wish to live at home as opposed to a nursing or assisted living facility. The company has nearly 300 franchises in 40 states and one Canadian province offering a wide range of personal and companion care services to assist seniors living independently with a strong focus on quality of life for the client and peace of mind for their families. Senior Helpers strives to be the leading companion and personal care provider that offers dependable, consistent, and affordable home care. For more information, please visit: [http://www.seniorhelpers.com/](http://www.seniorhelpers.com/)

**About Senior Gems®:**

Senior Gems® is a revolutionary program to help family members and professional caregivers properly care for their aging loved ones through each stage of dementia. Teepa Snow began developing her Gem Levels in 2006. In 2011, the Senior Gems® program was created with her guidance and assistance. This program puts Senior Helpers at the forefront of individual and in-home dementia-specialized care giving as they offer all of their in-home companions and caregivers the opportunity to become dementia care certified through the training program.