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Loving Yourself While Caring for Someone You Love

by Michael Colaw, Development Director

Caring for an aging family member is one of life's most profound expressions of love. It is also one of its greatest challenges. As caregivers, we often pour every ounce of energy into meeting our loved ones' needs, sometimes at the expense of our own well-being. But loving yourself is not selfish. It is essential to sustain the love you pour into another person.

Loving yourself as a caregiver begins with grace. Giving yourself grace means recognizing that perfection isn't the goal, compassion is. Grace is showing yourself kindness when you're tired, overwhelmed, or frustrated, and remembering that your best effort, not perfection, is enough. Simple things like taking a break for a walk, calling a friend, or enjoying a quiet cup of coffee aren't luxuries; they are necessary moments of replenishment.

Self-care also means honoring your physical and emotional health. Caregivers who intentionally prioritize sleep, healthy meals, exercise, and regular medical care are better equipped, both physically and mentally, to care for others. These practices help reduce stress and burnout, which are common among family caregivers.

Another important aspect of loving yourself is asking for and accepting help. Many caregivers hesitate to reach out, feeling they must do it all alone. But inviting others into the caregiving journey, whether family members, friends, or respite services, lightens your load and strengthens the circle of care around both you and your loved one.



Finally, maintain connection and joy. Caregiving can feel all-consuming, but preserving meaningful moments with your loved one, laughter, conversation, and shared stories, reminds you why you serve and deepens your relationship beyond the tasks.

Loving yourself isn't a destination; it's a practice. It's a daily choice to care for you, so you can continue your loving service with resilience, grace, and joy.

If you or someone you know is caring for an aging loved one, you don't have to walk this journey alone. Elder Care offers caregiver support opportunities designed to encourage connection, learning, and respite. Our Caregiver Support Group meets every Tuesday at 10:00 a.m. and follows a structured program focused on education and shared experiences. Our Open Door Café meets every Thursday at 10:00 a.m. and provides a relaxed, come-and-go setting where caregivers can connect, share stories, and simply enjoy being with others who understand. We invite you to join us and experience the power of community, encouragement, and grace.

Learn To Be a Savvy Caregiver

by Deanna Dodson, Director of Client Services

Caring for a person with Alzheimer's disease or dementia can be emotionally, physically, and mentally challenging. As the condition progresses, caregivers often face increasing difficulties that affect both their daily lives and overall well-being. According to the Alzheimer's Association, over seven million people are living with Alzheimer's, with nearly twelve million unpaid caregivers providing care for those with Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia. Caregivers often find themselves suddenly in roles they never anticipated and are understandably overwhelmed and searching for direction.

Equipping caregivers with knowledge about the disease process and strategies for handling day-to-day scenarios reduces burnout and encourages greater confidence in their ability to manage their caregiving role. Savvy Caregiver® is a proven, nationally recognized training program for caregivers of someone with memory loss, dementia, or Alzheimer's disease. The design of the Savvy Caregiver® workshop gives caregivers relevant knowledge, skills, and mastery to support the person living with dementia and to take care of themselves.

This evidence-based program includes information about Alzheimer's and related dementias, the role of confusion and its effects on behavior, the stages of dementia, and how to keep the person engaged and involved in daily activities. Also highlighted in the workshop are tools for decision-making for difficult issues that caregivers often face and caregiver self-care exercises. The program meets weekly for six weeks and provides a printed manual to reference



long after the workshop completes. Previous participants reported that at the end of the workshop, they felt a greater sense of ability to succeed in their caregiving role.

Our next workshop starts on February 11, 2026, and meets weekly for six weeks on Wednesday afternoons. If you or someone you know would benefit from expanding your caregiving knowledge, please reach out to Elder Care to sign up soon. Participants experience the value of being with others who understand this journey in addition to gaining the knowledge and skills that are the foundation of the Savvy Caregiver® workshop.

To learn more about The Savvy Caregiver, please call 918-336-8500 or email ddodson@abouteldercare.org.

Protect Your Vision, Protect Your Independence

by Michael Colaw, Development Director

Clear vision is one of the most important tools we have for staying active, independent, and safe as we age. Yet many age-related eye conditions, such as glaucoma, cataracts, macular degeneration, and diabetic eye disease, can develop slowly and with few early symptoms. Regular screenings are one of the best ways to catch issues early, protect eye health, and maintain quality of life.

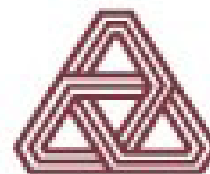
During the screening, participants will receive a brief assessment from trained professionals who specialize in the early detection of common eye conditions. These screenings are designed to identify potential concerns and help individuals determine whether further evaluation may be needed. Even if you aren't experiencing noticeable changes in your vision, preventive screenings are an essential part of preserving eye health as you age.

To support healthy aging in our community, Elder Care is partnering with Triad Eye Clinic to offer free eye screenings for adults ages 55 and older. This special event will take place on Wednesday, February 5, from 9:00–11:00 AM at Elder Care and is limited to the first 24 who reserve a spot. To reserve your spot, please call (918) 336-8500.

Whether you're managing a chronic condition, noticing changes in your eyesight, or simply staying proactive about your health, this free service is an easy, accessible way to take care of your vision. Triad Eye Clinic's team brings

years of expertise in ophthalmology and a strong commitment to community wellness, making this partnership an excellent resource for older adults in Bartlesville and surrounding areas.

At Elder Care, we believe that healthy aging begins with access to preventive care. We invite you to take advantage of this free screening opportunity and prioritize your vision, because protecting your sight today helps you stay active, engaged, and independent tomorrow.



TRIAD EYE
INSTITUTE

Why Socialization Matters for Healthy Aging

by Michael Colaw, Development Director

We often think of aging in terms of physical health, strength, balance, chronic conditions, and daily routines. But decades of research show that social health is just as essential. In a 2023 advisory, the U.S. Surgeon General reported that the health impact of prolonged social isolation can be equivalent to smoking up to 15 cigarettes a day. The National Institute on Aging also notes that loneliness is linked to higher risks of depression, cognitive decline, heart disease, and even earlier mortality, making social connections a vital component of healthy aging.

For many aging adults, the challenge isn't a lack of desire to connect; it's transportation barriers, the loss of long-time friends, caregiving responsibilities, mobility changes, or simply not knowing where to find meaningful opportunities to interact. Left unaddressed, isolation can slowly erode confidence, independence, and overall well-being.

At Elder Care, social connection is core to our mission. We believe that staying engaged, laughing with others, learning something new, or sharing a meal can be just as beneficial as any medical appointment. That's why we design programs that bring people together in ways that feel natural, uplifting, and fun.

For caregivers, our Caregiver Support Group offers both education and emotional connection. Every Tuesday at 10:00 AM, caregivers gather to share experiences, learn strategies, and find

encouragement from others who understand the journey. It's a space where burdens feel lighter because they're carried together.

The Elder Care Active Center is bustling this season with fitness classes, creative workshops, social gatherings, and wellness activities. Whether someone wants to improve balance, join a music group, try a new hobby, or simply enjoy time with others, the Active Center provides daily opportunities to stay engaged and energized.

We also host evening events throughout the month, including *Dinner with Friends*, special programs, and community gatherings. These events welcome both long-time participants and newcomers, creating warm, welcoming spaces for connection outside typical daytime hours.

Socialization isn't just a luxury; it's necessary for a happy and healthy life. Staying connected strengthens resilience, improves mood, and supports healthy aging in powerful ways. If you or someone you know is seeking more opportunities to stay active and connected, we invite you to explore everything Elder Care has to offer. Your next meaningful connection may be waiting right here.

To learn more about Elder Care and how we can help you stay socially active, go to www.abouteldercare.org or call (918) 336-8500.

Staying Active, Connected, and Engaged at the EC Active Center

by Claudia Dilbeck, Director of Community Relations and Outreach

The Elder Care Active Center continues to thrive as a warm, energetic hub where aging adults come to move, learn, and build meaningful connections. Each month brings new opportunities to stay active and engaged, and February is no exception. With a full schedule of classes designed for a wide range of interests and abilities, the Active Center is the perfect place to focus on health, happiness, and community.

Whether you're looking to improve flexibility, try a new activity, make friends, or simply add more fun to your week, our programs offer something for everyone. The environment is friendly, welcoming, and supportive, making it easy to show up just as you are and enjoy time with others who share similar goals for healthy aging.

Weekly Movement & Social Classes

Movement is a cornerstone of healthy living, and our weekly classes are thoughtfully designed to meet participants where they are. Gentle Yoga meets every Monday and Wednesday at 10:00 a.m., offering slow, therapeutic stretching and balance work. For those who enjoy learning steps with a smile, Beginner Line Dancing takes place every Monday and Wednesday at 9:00 a.m. and is one of our most joyful classes.

Cardio Drumming is sure to become a fast favorite. Meeting every Tuesday at 9:00 a.m., this upbeat, music-filled class blends simple rhythmic movement with drumming exercises using stability balls.

Wednesdays bring additional opportunities to connect and unwind. Train Dominoes meets

at 10:00 a.m. for friendly competition and conversation, followed by our ever-popular Singing Class at 11:00 a.m., where voices come together in a relaxed, encouraging setting.

On Thursdays at 9:00 a.m., Tai Chi provides gentle, flowing movement focused on balance, strength, and calm.

Monthly Classes to Spark Creativity and Connection

Each month, the Active Center also offers a rotation of special interest classes. Bingo meets on the second Thursday at 11:00 a.m. and always draws a lively group. Creativity flows during Handmade Card Making on the first Friday at 10:00 a.m., as well as Cooking & Crafting on the third Friday at 10:00 a.m.

For those wanting to grow their digital confidence, Socially Savvy Seniors: Understanding Facebook meets on the second Friday at 2:00 p.m., helping participants stay connected with family, friends, and community online.



February Events at Elder Care

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DINNER WITH FRIENDS
live music by Ashlee Elmore

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5:30 pm - 7:00 pm

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