

WTNS Radio OSU Extension Update for May 4, 2020
Healthy People. Healthy Finances. Healthy Relationships.

On today's OSU Extension update for Healthy People, Healthy Finances, and Healthy Relationships we'll talk about Caregiving Challenges and Encouragement and an upcoming virtual program for women in agriculture.

A few weeks ago, I watched a Facebook Live program where one of the speakers was Ney Bailey, 80-year-old woman who is caregiver to her 90-year-old friend with Alzheimer's. She shared that she used to have help caring for her friend in her home, but because of COVID-19 concerns, the in-home care workers had to leave. So, she is on her own to care for herself and her friend. She was very transparent in sharing how exhausting it was and how frustrated she could get with her friend at times.

I know that there are many people in our community who are caregivers for older family members. Caregivers may perform a range of activities, such as providing companionship, assisting with housework or providing medical and other forms of physical care.

According to Pew Research Center, almost one quarter of all US adults ages 45 to 65 are caring for an older adult. There are 40.4 million unpaid caregivers of adults ages 65 and older in the United States. Nearly ninety percent are caring for a parent. Most provide help to one aging adult, but 22 percent provide help to two. University of Illinois Extension also shares that 60 percent of caregivers are female and 60 percent are employed. The average hours of care per week given is over 20 hours.

Caregiving is a tough job any time, but our current situation of stay at home orders has certainly added to the stress for many. Cheri Burcham is a Family Life Extension Educator for University of Illinois Extension. She says that caregiver stress needs to be managed or caregivers will experience burnout, which is a syndrome of mental, emotional, and physical depletion. Burnout interferes with a caregiver's ability to function and is the leading cause of nursing home placement of the care receivers. The good news is that there are ways to prevent and manage caregiver stress by practicing methods of self-care:

- Practice relaxation techniques – deep breathing, meditation, music, etc.
- Express feelings by talking with someone

- Set realistic expectations about what the caregiver and care receiver can do
- Educate yourself on the care receiver's condition and skills needed to assist
- Take care of your own physical needs – good sleep, meals and exercise
- Accept help from others and don't be afraid to ask for help
- Get respite care and take breaks
- Practice good communication and optimism

Some of these are more challenging at this time. The American Association of Retired People offers some tips for caregivers. "Social isolation is already a huge problem for many older adults and for family caregivers," observes David L. Roth, director of the Johns Hopkins Center on Aging and Health. "It will be important for caregivers to maintain or even increase contact with others (family, friends) by phone, video chat and online communications, et cetera — but not in person."

One of the best things you can do at this time is to spend quality time with the care receiver and your family. Practice being fully present with the people and things you do enjoy. Thank you for caring. You can find additional resources from the Caregiver Support Network at u.osu.edu/caregiver, Area Agency on Aging Region 9 at aaa9.org, and the Ohio Department of Aging at aging.ohio.gov.

Also, for our women in agriculture here in Coshocton County, those who have participated in an Annie's Project understand the camaraderie and friendships that are developed during the course. They also understand the value of education to improve the farm operation. Keeping those two points in mind, the Ohio Women in Ag team is hosting a virtual Annie's Project Reunion this Wednesday, May 6 from 9-11 a.m.

Breakout sessions include grain and livestock market updates, backyard poultry, food prep and preservation and more. Those who have not participated in an Annie's Project are also invited to attend to learn more! Find more information and register at our website coshocton.osu.edu.

Remember: Keep cooking. Keep cleaning. Keep learning. Keep living. In closing, at OSU Extension, we are proud to work for Coshocton County to help improve our families, farms, and businesses. Please feel free to contact OSU Extension for more information at 740-622-2265 or visit our website at coshocton.osu.edu. Make it a healthy day!