

# CAREGIVER NEWS

*Region IV Area Agency on Aging Caregiver Newsletter*

## The Best Medicine

When it comes to dementia, a big belly laugh may be the best medicine. New research indicates that laughter may be as effective as antipsychotic medications for reducing anxiety in elderly people with dementia. Humor and jokes can produce positive feelings in a person with dementia, also leading to increased immune functioning and greater pain tolerance.

A recent report, aptly named the SMILE study, was conducted by a group of Australian researchers, who set out to discover whether humor could improve the lives of people living with dementia.

Over the course of three years, humor therapists were tasked with getting 400 dementia-stricken people to laugh more often. Their efforts produced an impressive result: a 20 percent reduction in anxiety – the same amount as a typical antipsychotic medication, according to lead researcher Lee-Fay Low. Pull that joke book off the shelf, watch some comedy, and lighten your heart!

### In This Issue:

- SMILE Study
- Three Essential Healthcare Documents
- Upcoming Classes Just for You
- Classic Anger Management Tip

... and more!



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## Three Essential Legal Documents Regarding Healthcare

When managing a loved one's healthcare, these three documents are key:

**HIPAA authorization** allows the doctor to keep approved family members in the loop regarding a loved one's medical status and billing information.

**Medical Power of Attorney (POA)**, also known as a health care proxy or power of attorney for health care, enables a person (called the "principal") to appoint a trusted relative or friend (called the "agent") to handle specific health care decisions on their behalf.

HIPAA authorization only grants a caregiver access to information, but a medical POA grants this as well as the ability to make medical decisions on behalf of a care recipient in the event they become incapacitated. There is a catch, though. This document must be prepared while a principal still has the mental capacity to give an agent these powers.

**Advance Care Directives, a.k.a. Living Wills**, record a person's wishes for emergency and/or end-of-life care before a medical crisis strikes. With a living will, an elder's loved ones don't have to agonize over difficult medical decisions. A living will typically indicates specific treatments, such as CPR or life support, that a person does or does not want to receive under certain circumstances. Work with your aging loved ones to prepare these important documents now, before emergencies strike.

**As a person providing care for an older adult or a person with dementia, Parkinson's or other medical diagnosis, you are faced with an enormous amount of responsibility and work... often without time to take care of your own needs.**

**We can help find resources and support services such as respite care, adult daycare, caregiver support groups, classes and more.**

**Call or email us:**

**(800) 654-2810**

**[info@areaagencyonaging.org](mailto:info@areaagencyonaging.org)**



# Free Zoom Classes Through RIV AAA

**Musical Mondays with Brandon Pierce** gathers virtually on Mondays starting February 2, 12:00-1:00 p.m.

**A Matter of Balance Virtually**, 10 sessions Tuesdays and Thursdays starting February 3 and ending March 3, 10 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. via Zoom. There is a \$20 fee for this class.

**Chronic Pain PATH (Personal Action Toward Health)** is a 6-week online workshop starting Thursday, February 10, 1:00 - 4:00 p.m. via Zoom. This workshop is free; donations are welcomed.

**Caregiver Support Group Hosted in Conjunction with Caring Circle**, every third Tuesday, February 15, 1:00-2:00 p.m. via Zoom. Free.

**Cookies for Breakfast -- Really?** Learn to make Apple Oatmeal Breakfast Cookies in Healthy Cooking with Bronson. Wednesday, February 16, 2:00-3:00 p.m. via Zoom. Free.

**Creating Confident Caregivers** is a 6-week class starting March 1, 1:00 - 3:00 p.m. via Zoom. This class is for family members caring for a loved one with dementia, such as Alzheimer's. Free; donations are welcomed.

**Developing Dementia Dexterity Class** is a 3-week class on March 3, 10 and 17, 2:00 -3:00 p.m. via Zoom. Free.

To register for any of these classes today, call Amy Nichols at 269-982-7748 or email [AmyNichols@AreaAgencyonAging.org](mailto:AmyNichols@AreaAgencyonAging.org).

For a complete, up-to-date listing, visit our website:  
<https://campusforcreativeaging.org/classes/>

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## Angry? Count to Ten

Have you recently found yourself lashing out uncharacteristically? Due to added stress, increased anger is a common side effect of caregiving.

It may sound cliché, but there's a reason why counting to ten is a recommended anger management strategy—it works. When something upsets you, mentally taking a step back and counting to ten helps prevent knee-jerk reactions and allows you extra time to decide how to handle the situation.

If you haven't gathered your thoughts after counting to ten, continue counting as long as you need. Take slow, deep breaths. If you can, remove yourself from the room or building where your anger has been triggered.

Region IV Area Agency on Aging supports your caregiving and aging needs

Contact us at:

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(800) 654-2810

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