



Powerful Tools = Caregiver Support

by Sheila Koca, Family Living
Educator, Waushara County

“Taking Care of You: Powerful Tools for Caregiving” six week educational program can lead into the formation of a support group. It can also be used as an educational piece for an ongoing support group. Through my experience as a class leader, I have seen these connections happen. One class

consisted of several caregivers who had heard about **Powerful Tools** through their support group. They, in turn, introduced other class members to their support group. The sharing and reinforcement of the tools learned in class continues through the support group meetings.

Another **Powerful Tools** class series was taught specifically for members of an ongoing support group. This group was already very cohesive and supportive of one another and immediately helped one another practice and learn the caregiving tools.

Finally, in a third class on **Powerful Tools**, several participants were interested in forming a new support group. By the end of the class, they had designed their support group.

Powerful Tools curriculum doesn't allow time during class for one-on-one sharing and support. Yet, as caregivers discover others who are in similar situations. They want an opportunity to be heard and understood and a support group is a logical next step for many family caregivers.

Powerful Tools and Caregiver Support go hand in hand. The challenge for class leaders is to keep them separate enough to meet the needs of all class participants during the series while encouraging the continuation of group support.

A Thankful Caregiver

sent to Kathy Miller, Family Living Educator,
Bayfield County

Dear Kathy,
Recently, I have been thinking about our Caregiver class and what a help it was to me. I wanted to thank you and Betty and hope you're planning to have more classes for those who find themselves caregivers. We, my husband and I, had just moved to the area because my husband has dementia and we have family here.

The class immediately introduced me to eight women who were like “sisters” in that they each had helpful ideas on the way they handled different situations.

When you and Betty role-played different situations, you illustrated different words, phrases, and tones of voice that could calm the care receiver and prevent an explosive or upsetting reaction.

The “Caregiver Helpbook” has a wealth of information and I refer to it frequently, as I also use the handouts given in class. It is reassuring to know that I am not alone. I know I could call any member of my class and they would “be there” for me. I was also amazed at how much help there is in the community and the class alerted me to that.

In closing, I want to thank you and those who supported the class. My family and I appreciated the self-confidence I gained as a result of the support and knowledge I received through attending the class.

Sincerely,
AW

Number of Class Leaders is Growing for **Powerful Tools**

As of this publication, the Alliance for Family Caregiving has trained 87 Class Leaders. Fifteen class leaders were trained since July. To see who the class leaders are and which counties they are in, go to the Alliance Web site at: <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/flp/caregiving/commwork/map.html>

And Thou Shalt Honor... PBS Broadcast, October 9, 2002

There are an estimated 30 million men and women who currently provide care for the elderly and the disabled. Their stories are told in **AND THOU SHALT HONOR...Caring for our Aging parents, Spouses, and Friends**, a groundbreaking two-hour documentary hosted by actor Joe Mantegna. It will premiere on Wednesday, October 9, at 8 p.m. on PBS (check local listings).

In Wisconsin, the statewide broadcast will include an opportunity for caregivers to call in questions and to receive a statewide caregiving resource book. On Thursday evening (October 10), from 7-8 p.m., caregivers will be able to participate in a live web-chat with experts. Experts will answer caregiver questions and offer resources and support. One of the supports they will share is the opportunity to participate in a **Taking Care of You: Powerful Tools for Caregiving** workshop. The names of individuals trained to teach **Powerful Tools** will be shared as local contacts, along with the resources, on the Web site. To participate in the web discussion, log on to:
<http://www.portalwisconsin.org/>

The PBS broadcast will be extended by a national outreach campaign, an extensive searchable Web site already in operation at:
<http://www.thoushalthonor.org>
and a resource book, *The Caregiver's Companion*, with a foreword by Rosalynn Carter.

Use the PBS broadcast as a community event to create awareness of programs/services in your community for family members who are providing care to others.

Preliminary Data from **Powerful Tools**

Workshops

by Mary Brintnall-Peterson, Program Specialist in Aging, UW-Extension

A Big "Thank You" to all class leaders who have been completing the pre- and post-evaluations. Data from 4 workshops include:

- 71% of the participants are women
- 56% of the individuals being cared for have Alzheimer's or some form of dementia with 78% of them experiencing problems with memory loss
- 95% of the participants rated the programs as very good or excellent
- participants reported that they have used the various tools shared in the workshop series, including relaxation tools (22%), action plans, "I" messages, and assertive conversation (17%).

Comments from participants:

- "With an Alzheimer patient, using the Aikido communication is almost impossible, as he does not speak for hours when I'm with him. I used to get angry because of this, but now I'm using positive self-talk, realizing that I am doing the best I can with our situation. I realize that his medication no longer allows him to express his feelings. I guess deep down I know what he is feeling and I am no longer angry that we can't have communication".
- "My confidence level has improved this week".
- "Helped me to control my anger because it's not him, it's the disease. Taught me to take time for myself. Taught me to relax".