



# Alive & WELL

**WPS**  
HEALTH INSURANCE®

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## Caring for Ill or Aging Parents

### *Advice from Someone Who's Been There*

Throughout our lives we may have many roles in our family, such as child, parent, sibling, aunt or uncle. As the population grows older, more people are finding themselves in a role they may not have planned for: caregiver for an aging parent.

We want to believe our parents will live forever. They are Mom and Dad. They're the ones that set the rules and guided us in the right direction. It can be a challenging adjustment when the role is reversed, and the child has to help make decisions and do the guiding for the parent. Making things more challenging is the fact that many adults find themselves caring for one or both aging parents at the same time they are raising their own children.

Mary Carlson, manager of chronic care management for WPS Health Insurance, found herself caring for her parents after her 83-year-old father had a stroke. At the time her mother was 81 and in the early stages of dementia, and her three kids were high school and college-aged. I asked Mary if she'd be willing to share her experience with our readers, and offer some suggestions and support to others in a caregiver role.



*Mary's parents posing with some of their grandchildren (they had 18 in all).*

### **How did you become a caregiver for your parents?**

My parents never lived in the same city as my husband Bill and I, so I never really gave much thought to having

my parents near us, until their health declined and it became obvious they needed family close by. After much discussion with my three brothers and two sisters, we decided to have our parents live near Bill and me in Cottage Grove, which turned out to be for the last three years of their lives.

### **What was your strategy for helping your children cope and understand what was going on?**

Open communication and lots of communication is the key...our kids were in high school and college. With all the demands that go with their lives, and trying to balance very busy schedules, giving each child the time and attention they deserved was challenging. We had multiple family conferences with the kids when we were all together, we were always available 24/7 to discuss anything with them, and sometimes we had good talks late at night, which is when they would like to talk. We had our faith for strength and support.

### **Are there any community and state resources that you found particularly helpful when caring for your parents?**

We used Meals on Wheels when my parents were in their apartment. They looked forward to a hot meal every day. The Wisconsin Council of the Blind was most helpful with assistive devices for my mom as her vision was failing. She was an avid reader and loved to watch ball games. My mom wanted to visit my dad daily in the nursing home. This was difficult to arrange since my family all worked full time. Our church provided a list of wonderful retired folks who offered to drive Mom back and forth to the nursing home just about every day. This was just a huge help, and we will be forever grateful.

### **What did you find to be the best method to keep family members up to date?**

My brother would set up a teleconference multiple times with the six siblings. This was really a lifeline for all of us... to keep the lines of communication open, and this worked really well. We found that e-mail was also very effective. I would e-mail everyone periodic updates on our parents.

## Our Family Issue

This issue of *Alive & Well* is all about family. Inside you'll find articles and features that we hope will help you achieve new levels of personal, spiritual, and mental wellness—from caring for aging parents to achieving personal goals. Take care, and we'll see you again in January with more wellness-related articles and tips.

### **Do you have any general advice to others in a similar situation?**

I would say using all the community support that is out there, keeping all the lines of communication open with family and friends, letting other family and friends not only take care of your loved one, but allow them to take care of the caregivers also. Take breaks and even short vacations if at all possible. This helped us to regroup, and renew our strength and energy to be caregivers, while managing very busy lives.

### **With the holidays approaching, can you provide some suggestions on ways to create cohesiveness and focus on celebration while there is underlying fear, sadness, or other emotions?**

Our holidays included my parents, and we all knew they were special times with my parents' health declining. My parents passed away in November, six days apart, so Christmas that year was really hard. We still all got together, reminisced, laughed and cried, supported each other, went to church together, lit the memorial candle, and let the emotions come as they may. It was healthier to work through our emotions than suppress how we felt.

For more information on caregiving, including support resources, go to [www.wisconsin caregiver.org](http://www.wisconsin caregiver.org).

*Contributed by Ashley Goddard*

# Essential Steps to Making Permanent Life Changes

We have reached part six of the making permanent life changes series. Our goal in developing this series was to provide an outline for making change that can be used again and again. The steps we covered were: creating a plan for change, tracking progress and successes, setting up a reward system, establishing a support system, filling up your motivation tank, and making sustainable changes in your health behaviors! Part six is about how to redefine goals and add new challenges.

When we achieve a goal, we sometimes forget the steps we took to reach the desired outcome. However, it is important to evaluate both the process and your progress. Doing this helps you to better understand the relationship between your current state and your goal. The process is the series of actions designed to help you reach your goal. While progress is the actual movement toward your goal and how close came to achieving it. The activities below will help you evaluate both the process and your progress.

## Activity 1: Evaluate the Process

These questions will identify which steps in the process you implemented.

Did I complete the SMART the goal form?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Did I have a tracking system?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Did I reward myself?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Did I have a support system?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Did I work on increasing my motivation to make change?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No

## Activity 2: Evaluate Your Progress

These questions will help you identify successes you achieved in your movement toward your goal.

Did I achieve my SMART goal?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Is my goal part of my normal daily/weekly routine?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Am I ready to add to my goals?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Am I satisfied with my achievements?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No

# Healthy Moves

## Stability Ball Hamstring Curls

A stability ball is one of the most versatile pieces of exercise equipment you can buy. For around \$15-20, a stability ball is a fairly inexpensive way to add variation to your workouts. They are available at most stores that sell sporting goods. A stability ball also makes a great holiday gift!

**Starting Position:** Lie on the floor with the stability ball under your legs, somewhere between your calves and heels. Your arms should remain at your side on the floor, slightly under your body, to help control your position.

**Movement:** Press up, so that your hips are in the air and your torso forms a straight line. Next, pull the ball toward you while squeezing your hamstrings, and then roll it back out without dropping your hips.

### Trainer's Instructions:

- Lift one arm off the floor and place it on your chest for an added challenge. Once you feel comfortable with one arm up, raise the other arm up as well.
- Focus on digging your heels into the ball. It is not as important to get your hips high as it is to apply as much pressure as possible to the ball.
- If you feel your calves cramp up, try pointing your toes away from you during the movement.

**Variations:** Single-Leg Stability Ball Hamstring Curl: Place one leg on the ball and keep your other leg straight, extended over the ball (not touching the ball). Perform a curl with a single leg for the desired number of repetitions and then repeat on the other side.

For Activity 1, if you answered "Yes" to four to five questions, you are more likely to have achieved your goal and answered "Yes" to more questions in Activity 2.

For Activity 2, if you answered "Yes" to three or fewer questions, you are less likely to have achieved your goal and you may have answered "No" to more questions in Activity 2.

## Redefining Your Goals



The questions above are important for increasing success and reducing frustration when making behavior change. Look at your answers for Activity 1. Did you implement all the actions? If not, why? These actions have been proven to increase behavior change success rates. Therefore if you are redefining your goals and missed some actions initially make a plan to implement all the actions.

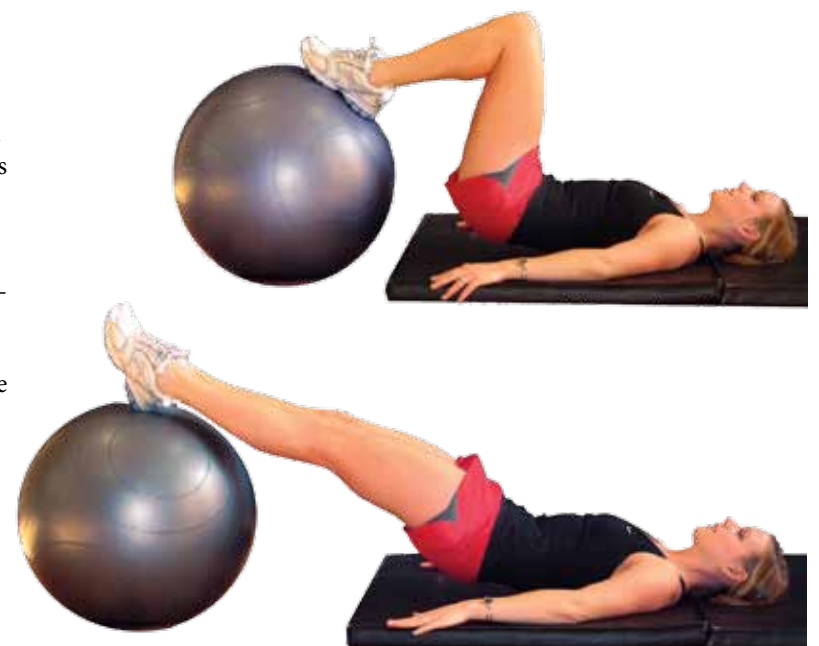
Moving onto Activity 2, if you achieved your goal you most likely implemented four or more actions from Activity 1. If you did not achieve your goal, do not get frustrated. This is the time to redefine the process you will implement in order to achieve your goal. These two activities help you to use this experience as your guide to making other changes or adding other challenges.

Above all, the most important thing about making permanent life change is staying positive and enjoying both the process and your progress.

Thank you for taking the time to read this six-part series on making permanent life change! I hope this series has served as a guide to help you achieve your goals. In addition, I hope you apply this model again and again to achieve the quality of life you deserve!

*Contributed by Emily Moenck*

**FINAL PART** of  
a Six-Part Series  
on **Making Change**



*Consult with a physician before starting any exercise program.*

# WPS Wellness Holiday Traditions

Many families have holiday traditions that they've developed over the years, or have been passed down through generations. Since this issue of *Alive & Well* is all about family, we thought it would be fun to share some of the traditions that we hold dear, when we get together with our own families for the holidays

## Emily's Christmas Tradition

This will be the third year in a row that my husband and I cut down our own Christmas tree. This was a family tradition that my husband brought from his family into ours. We were so excited the first year to search for the "perfect" tree. During our hunt it started to snow, which we thought was wonderful. After about an hour of walking, we finally located the perfect tree. We cut it down and then realized we had a long walk, dragging our tree, back to our car.



Once we got the tree home we dragged it into the house and started to unwrap the twine. We quickly realized our excitement had gotten the best of us. Our tree was huge! Not only did the tree barely clear the ceiling, but it took up the entire room. The size quickly became a secondary issue as the snow, which was so wonderful outside, now was drenching the carpet in our living room. Ah, memories!

## Ashley's Holiday Traditions

The Saturday after Thanksgiving, for the past seven years, we've had a cookie baking day. My mom, sisters, and all the grandkids don aprons and spend the day yielding spatulas. The participants change as more grandkids are added to the family (this year there will be three and next year there will be four, all under the age of four).

We make about five to six different kinds of cookies and candies.

The last couple of years we've made a point to use healthy recipes or make substitutions to our traditional recipes.

Date pinwheels, peanut butter buttons, molasses, and cranberry-oatmeal cookies are some of our favorites. The goodies are then divided up among the families to take to parties, enjoy at home, or to use in gift boxes.

My husband and I have some holiday traditions as well. We like to drive around Olin-Turville Park, across from the Coliseum in Madison, for the Holiday Fantasy in Lights display. We also like to tour

various parts of Madison to look at the lights. It is extra special when it is lightly snowing out. If it is warm, we often walk.

I am excited to adopt new traditions, too, as we will have a new addition to our family at Christmastime next year. As a child, I loved waking up to open the presents that Santa Claus brought, and I can't wait to see the same excitement on my children's faces.

## Sarah's Christmas Tradition

With five young-adult children, my dad and step-mom find it difficult to get everyone together for the holidays—or any time during the year. Since they married six years ago, we've taken a family vacation to Mexico over Christmas. With our busy lives, and siblings spread around North America, it's the one time of year that we are all under one roof. It is a little strange to be in a warm climate without snow on Christmas, but having everyone together is well worth it.

On Christmas day, each of the five kids opens one gift. My step-mom has been buying ornaments for her two kids since they were little and when she married my dad she added my brothers and me to their tradition.



I'm always curious to see what type of ornament theme she'll use each year because she buys the ornaments from all over the country and chooses them to match each of our personalities. She writes our name and the year on each ornament, but keeps all of our ornaments after we open them. Her plan is to give each of us all of our acquired ornaments when we get married and have a family of our own. Our ages range from 25 to 30 and so far none of us have the ornaments in our possession, so we always joke about who's going to get them first...and last. I'm so glad we do this simple yet memorable tradition and I definitely plan on doing it someday with my family.

# Venison Nutrition

Having a hard time trying to find the nutritional content of venison (deer meat)? You're not alone. This information can be difficult to find, as venison is not sold in grocery stores.

If you're lucky enough to come across a good piece of venison, know that it has great nutritional value. Like most red meat, venison a good source of protein, vitamins, and minerals, but unlike other red meats it's very low in fat, especially saturated fat.

Venison can be prepared the same way you'd prepare beef (grilled, fried, stewed, marinated, ground). The taste is also similar, with a slightly "wild" flavor. You can subdue the gaminess by using a marinade like buttermilk, or cooking it with nonfat beef broth.

See the chart below for complete nutritional value provided by the U.S.D.A.

Contributed by Jeff Hlavacka

## Nutrition Facts

Serving Size	4 oz.
<b>Amount per Serving</b>	
<b>Calories</b>	174
<b>Total Fat</b>	8g
<b>Saturated Fat</b>	4g
<b>Trans Fat</b>	0g
<b>Cholesterol</b>	91mg
<b>Sodium</b>	71mg
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b>	0g
<b>Dietary Fiber</b>	0g
<b>Sugars</b>	0g
<b>Protein</b>	25g
B12 – 36% of daily value	
Iron – 17% of daily value	



# HEALTH ACTION CENTER

Visit the WPS Health Center and take a more active role in your health. Search the Healthwise Knowledgebase to find answers to your health questions, use our interactive symptom checker when you have an illness or injury, and get tips for living a healthier lifestyle. Every topic is reviewed by medical experts and based on the most reliable, up-to-date information.

Below, we've highlighted some tools and resources from the Healthwise Knowledgebase to get you started. Just visit the Health Center on the WPS website to access the links.

## Sleep tight. Don't let the bedbugs bite.

Bedbugs have creepy-crawled into homes, hotels, theaters, thrift stores, and headlines. The reports often tell you how to get rid of them and the source of the infestation. But what if your body has already been in the buggy battle zone? Should you scratch that itch? Other than the creep factor, what are the real health concerns? **Visit the Health Center at [www.wpsic.com](http://www.wpsic.com) to learn what to do if the bedbugs bite.**



## Kiss off, bugs!

If you think bedbugs are creepy, parts of the country deal with kissing bugs. Like the bedbug, but bigger, kissing bugs hide in beds, furniture, wood, and paper trash, and they feed at night. If you live where kissing bugs live, while you're sleeping, your face may be their dining destination. **Visit the Health Center at [www.wpsic.com](http://www.wpsic.com) to find out how to get rid of them and stop that scratching.**

## What "eggsactly" is salmonella?

Salmonella refers to the kinds of bacteria that cause a type of food poisoning called salmonellosis. Headlines are hatching the news of egg recalls because so many people have been sick. Even if your brand of eggs hasn't been recalled, you can still take steps to reduce your family's risk of food poisoning. **Visit the Health Center at [www.wpsic.com](http://www.wpsic.com) to learn what you can do to prevent salmonella or other types of food poisoning.**

## We Want to Hear from You

We value your feedback and suggestions. How can we improve the *Alive & Well* newsletter? If you have questions, comments, or suggestions, please email Jeff Hlavacka, senior coordinator of preventive health services, at [jeff.hlavacka@wpsic.com](mailto:jeff.hlavacka@wpsic.com).

## Meet the WPS Wellness Team



**JEFF HLAVACKA**, senior coordinator of preventive health services

Jeff graduated from University of Wisconsin Oshkosh, earning his Bachelor of Science degree in exercise physiology with minors in health education and sports coaching. Jeff holds certifications in personal training, group exercise, tobacco cessation, and worksite wellness management.



**ASHLEY GODDARD**, health promotion specialist

Ashley has a bachelor's degree in health promotion from the University of Wisconsin-Platteville with a minor in psychology. Her education helps her understand the many factors that determine a person's overall health. Ashley also has experience teaching group fitness classes, as well as coaching adults in a wellness setting.



**EMILY MOENCK**, health promotion specialist

Emily graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point with a bachelor's degree in health promotion and wellness, with a minor in safety and health protection. Before joining WPS, Emily spent four years with Kohler Co. working on occupational safety and wellness initiatives. She is also a certified American Lung Association Freedom from Smoking facilitator.



**SARAH WOOD**, health promotion specialist

Sarah graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee with a bachelor's degree in kinesiology and a submajor in exercise and fitness. She received her wellness coach certificate from the Health for Life Institute, and is also certified in ACE group exercise, Turbo Kick, PiYo™, and yoga.

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