



# CAREGIVER LINK

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560 Seminole Road

Muskegon, MI



## 6 Tips for beating Cabin Fever When You Are a Caregiver

*Taken in part from [www.seniorhousingnet.com](http://www.seniorhousingnet.com)*

Winter can be a tough time of year for family caregivers who live in colder climates. Once the hustle and bustle of the holidays is over, the cold, snowy days can seem never-ending. Many older adults avoid leaving home on winter days for fear of falling. That often means their family caregiver is stuck at home, too. It's a combination that can cause cabin fever for both the senior and their caregiver. In fact, research shows that as many as 15% of people have a difficult time during the winter months. Some even develop a condition known as seasonal affective disorder (SAD). This health condition is linked to a change in seasons or a lack of exposure to sunlight.

*If you are a caregiver struggling with cabin fever and the winter blues, we have a few tips that may help you beat them.*

**1. Limit carbs:** When you are feeling blue, comfort foods can taste great. Unfortunately, they are usually loaded with carbs. That means you will likely end up feeling tired and sluggish, which further exacerbates the problem. Instead of carb-laden foods, opt for meals that are rich in fruits, vegetables, nuts, fish, and lean protein. You will feel more energetic and positive.

**2. Limit alcohol:** Alcohol is a depressant that may aggravate a case of cabin fever. It can also contribute to dehydration. When you are consuming too many alcoholic beverages, you likely are drinking too few

beneficial ones. If you limit alcohol consumption and opt instead for water, hot tea, or juice, you'll stay hydrated and feel better.

**3. Spend time outdoors:** When the cold winds of winter blow, it can be tempting to hibernate until spring. While that's understandable, it isn't great for your mental or physical well-being. Weather permitting, bundle up and pull on a pair of skid-proof boots. Heading outdoors to soak up nature can give your spirit the boost it needs.

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### An Area Agency on Aging

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Muskegon, Michigan 49444  
Phone: (231) 733-3585  
Toll Free: 1-800-442-0054

info@seniorresourceswmi.org  
www.seniorresourceswmi.org

## Mission

To provide a comprehensive and coordinated system of services designed to promote the independence and dignity of older persons and their families in Muskegon, Oceana, and Ottawa – a mission compelling us to target older persons in greatest need but to advocate for all.



## Caregiver Support

**Paula Kolberg**

Caregiver Support Specialist  
pkolberg@seniorresourceswmi.org  
231.683.4760

## Go Green or Stop Receiving Newsletter

If you would like your copy of the *Caregiver Link* emailed or would like to discontinue receiving our newsletter, simply send your request to: [kport@seniorresourceswmi.org](mailto:kport@seniorresourceswmi.org).

**4. Get quality sleep:** Both the blues and SAD can cause sleep problems. Some people don't get enough sleep, while others may sleep too much. Try to get your senior family member on a consistent sleep schedule that includes 7–8 hours of quality sleep each night. That will make it easier for you to do the same. If insomnia or other sleep disturbances persist for either of you, talk with a primary care physician. They may make a referral to a sleep clinic for further evaluation.

**5. Stay connected:** While you may be stuck indoors more, you don't have to lose touch with friends and family during the winter. In fact, staying connected helps prevent loneliness and cabin fever. Use technologies like Zoom and FaceTime to keep in contact. Social media platforms can also be useful for staying in touch until spring arrives and it's safer to venture out for social occasions.

**6. Utilize respite care:** A change of scenery may also help you beat cabin fever. If your budget permits, schedule a trip to a sunny destination for a few days. You can take advantage of respite care services at a local assisted living community for your senior loved one. Your family member will enjoy all the activities and events offered at the community, in addition to nutritious meals and support with personal care.

## Your Caregiver Troubleshooting Guide

- If an activity isn't working, don't be discouraged – Pivot! The key is to be observant and flexible.
- Are they agitated? Switch to a more calming, rhythmic activity (like listening to music or rocking).
- Are they unresponsive? Try a different sensory input, like a different texture or a familiar scent.
- Keep it short. Even 5 minutes of positive engagement is a success. The goal is a moment of connection, not a long project.
- Join in. Do the activity alongside them. Your calm presence is the most therapeutic part of the experience.
- We hope these ideas help you find new ways to connect and bring peace to your days. What activities have worked for your loved one?



# MI VIRTUAL CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUPS



Below are three virtual support group options (General, Dementia, and Kinship) for you to join. These support groups will discuss issues, challenges, and concerns that caregivers face. These groups are informal and provide dialogue along with peer support. Participants will be able to reflect and connect with others in a similar situation.

## DEMENTIA CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUP

First Wednesday of the month  
from 5:00 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.

Zoom Meeting Link:

Meeting ID: 876 5118 1524

Dial by Phone: 1.312.626.6799



## RELATIVES RAISING RELATIVE'S CHILDREN (KINSHIP) CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUP

Second Thursday of the month  
from 10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

Zoom Meeting Link:

Meeting ID: 876 5118 1524

Dial by Phone: 1.312.626.6799



## GENERAL CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUP

First Monday of the month  
from 5:30 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

Zoom Meeting Link:

Meeting ID: 876 5118 1524

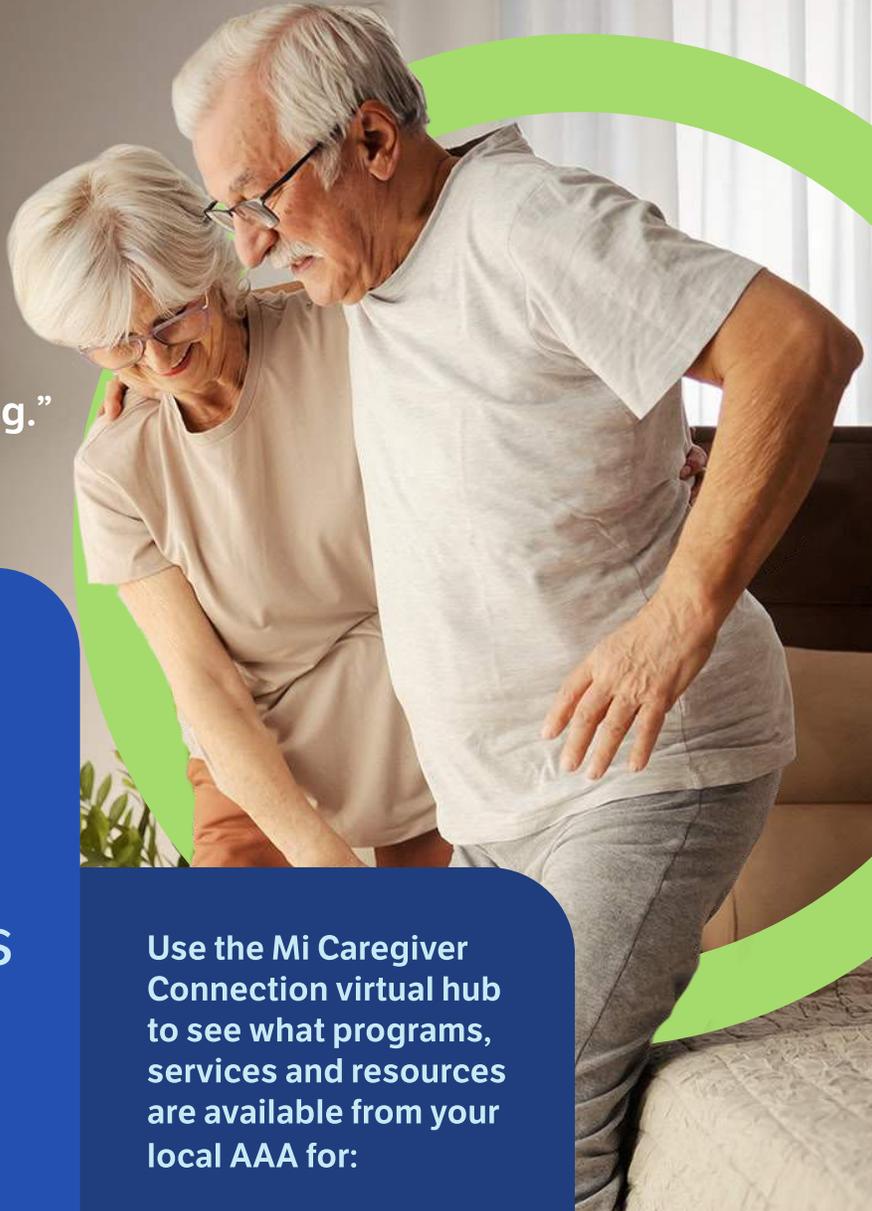
Dial by Phone: 1.312.626.6799



### SUPPORT GROUP TOPICS:

- **January:** Setting Healthy Boundaries
- **February:** Understanding Grief and Loss
- **March:** Caregiver Burnout Compassion Fatigue
- **April:** Effective Communication
- **May:** Dealing with Family Issues
- **June:** Helpful Tools and Technology
- **July:** Asking for Help
- **August:** How to Cope with Lack of Sleep
- **September:** Home Safety/Fall Prevention
- **October:** In-Home Help
- **November:** Caregiving During the Holidays
- **December:** Self-Care





“Instead of feeling afraid and alone, I found strength from my AAA, knowing others had walked this road before me. Caregiving doesn’t have to feel isolating.”

— Char

# Caregiving takes time.

## Finding resources shouldn't.

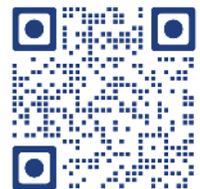
If you are a caregiver balancing work and family life with caring for an aging loved one, your local Area Agency on Aging (AAA) can help.

For over 50 years, Michigan’s 16 AAAs have worked with a clear mission: to enhance the quality of life for older adults, adults with disabilities and caregivers.

Use the Mi Caregiver Connection virtual hub to see what programs, services and resources are available from your local AAA for:

- Respite Care for Caregivers
- In-Home Care
- Caregiver Support Groups
- Education, Workshops and Training
- And more

Get connected to support at [MiCaregiverConnection.com](https://www.MiCaregiverConnection.com).



# 10 Great Activities for People with Dementia

Taken in part from [www.dailycaring.com](http://www.dailycaring.com)

Finding the right activity for someone with dementia isn't about filling time; it's a powerful form of care that can reduce anxiety, spark joy, and restore a sense of purpose. But so many well-intentioned activities backfire, leading to frustration for everyone.

The secret isn't adding more stimulation; it's shifting your entire approach from achievement-based tasks to connection-centered experiences. The following "no-fail" ideas are designed to help you create moments of calm, happy engagement for you and your loved one.

When other hobbies fail, these ideas succeed because they focus on what remains, not what's lost. They are built on core principles that reduce anxiety and promote success:

**Engage the Senses:** Scent, touch, and sound can unlock positive memories and emotions without relying on short-term memory.

**Focus on the Process, Not the Outcome:** There's no "right" or "wrong" way to do most of these, which eliminates the frustration of failure.

**Use Muscle Memory:** Repetitive, simple motions (like folding or rocking) feel familiar and calming to the body.

**Prioritize Connection:** The ultimate goal isn't a perfect product; it's a moment of shared experience and nonverbal bonding.

## Failure-Free Activities for People with Dementia

### 10 Fantastic, Failure-Free Activities for People with Dementia

Each person is unique, so it may take some experimentation or creative thinking to find activities that appeal to them.

#### 1.) Fold Towels Together

- Asking an older adult to help you fold laundry is a great way to keep them occupied, provide an activity they can excel at, and help them feel like they're contributing to the household. The goal is to keep them happily engaged.
- Simple, repetitive tasks like folding warm towels or matching socks can provide a profound sense of purpose and usefulness. The tactile sensation is also calming. Towels are great because they're small and easily folded.
- No matter how well or poorly the towels are folded, the point is that an adult with dementia feels good about the activity, and about themselves.
- Caregiver Pro-Tip: Keep a dedicated basket with clean, simple-to-fold items like washcloths and hand towels. When restlessness strikes, you have a ready-to-go activity that feels genuinely helpful.

#### 2.) Create a Memory Box

- Putting together a memory box is a great way to engage seniors with dementia
- A memory box (or rummage box) can help an older adult feel connected to their past career and previous hobbies.

Continued on page 6



## March and April Website

[www.micaregiverconnection.com](http://www.micaregiverconnection.com)

## Quotes

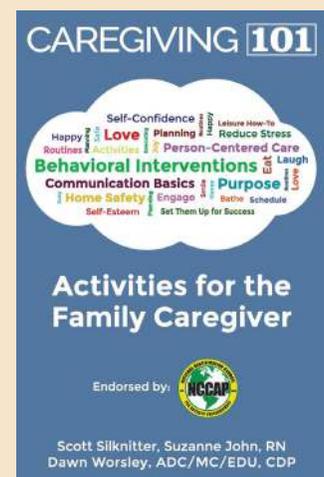
- *Spring will come and so will happiness. Hold on. Life will get warmer.* – Anita Krizzan
- *Springtime is the land awakening. The March winds are the morning yawn.* – Lewis Grizzard
- *Spring is nature's way of reminding us that change doesn't happen overnight, but it always happens.* – Emma Davidson

## This Month's Book

Activities for the Family Caregiver:

Caregiving 101

By: Scott Silknitter (Author),  
Suzanne John (Author) and  
Dawn Worsley (Author).



- Acquire any box and fill it with items they would have used at work, copies of photos, and nonimportant keepsakes, or objects from hobbies.
- For example, for a former office worker, create a box that reminds them of their career. In the box, include paper clips, pencils, erasers, paper, junk mail (letters), a calculator, file folders, notepads, and other relevant items.
- If the person used to do handy work, put nuts, bolts, PVC pipe pieces and fittings, a piece of wood (no splinters), fine-grit sandpaper, and twine in their box.
- Someone who enjoys cooking or baking may appreciate measuring spoons, a whisk, a spatula, and other related kitchen tools.
- This approach can work for any job or hobby; be creative in finding objects that are safe to handle.
- Caregiver Pro-Tip: Rotate the objects every few days to keep the activity feeling new and interesting without being overwhelming.

### 3.) Untie Knots from a Rope or String

- Tying knots with rope is a great activity for seniors with dementia
- Find a rope of medium thickness at your local hardware store. Loosely tie a few simple knots and ask an older adult to help you untie them. Simple right? You'd be surprised at how pleasing this can be for someone who desperately wants to find success at just about anything.
- Caregiver Pro-Tip: Make sure that the knots aren't too difficult to untie. We're aiming for entertainment and success, not frustration.

### 4.) Arrange Flowers Together

- Provide a sturdy vase and a few fresh, fragrant flowers with the stems already cut to a safe length. The vibrant



colors and gentle scent are wonderfully engaging.

- Caregiver Pro-Tip: Gardenias, lavender, or roses offer intense, pleasant aromas. Guide their hands gently if they need help placing the flowers.

### 5.) Create a Box of Fun Fabrics or other Objects

- Activities for people with dementia - Playing with a box of fabrics.
- This is fun for everyone, but especially for someone who used to enjoy sewing or fabric crafts.
- Get a box and put dozens of pieces of assorted fabrics inside. Try to get different colors and textures, such as lace, felt, silk, velvet, wool, and cotton.
- An older adult can enjoy touching, folding, and sorting the fabrics, or organizing other items.
- Caregiver Pro-Tip: Use items that are too large to be a choking hazard. The satisfying "clink" of buttons going into a metal tin can be part of the sensory appeal, but they can be dangerous if ingested.

### 6.) Cut Pictures From Old Magazines or Calendars

- Great activities for seniors with dementia - Cutting out pictures for a scrap book
- Older adults may enjoy browsing through old magazines or calendars and cutting out their favorite images to keep. It's best to use magazines that reflect their hobbies or interests.
- Those who'd enjoy it could also paste the pictures into a notebook, creating a fun "scrapbook."
- Caregiver Pro-Tip: Purchase some safe scissors, such as those used in schools for children. You don't want to risk a cut while enjoying an activity like this one!

### 7.) Large Print Playing Cards

- Activities for Seniors - Large Print Playing Cards
- Playing card games is an excellent activity for older adults, especially when the letters and numbers are large and easily read.
- Someone with early-stage dementia might enjoy simple card games like solitaire, Go Fish, Blackjack, or War. An older adult in later stages might enjoy simply shuffling the cards or separating them by color or suit.
- Please pay attention to their level of enjoyment. If they seem overwhelmed or frustrated, you may want to remove some cards so they don't have to manage so many.
- Caregiver Pro-Tip: Make sure that the knots aren't too difficult to untie. We're aiming for entertainment and success, not frustration.

Are you a caregiver? Do you assist your loved one with essential daily tasks? You're a caregiver and you're not alone. Thousands of individuals are caring for their loved ones and **we can help.**

Senior Resources' Support Groups meet regularly to provide advice, support, tips, guidance and a safe place to share concerns.

# CAREGIVER *Support Groups*

## JOIN US

Attend regularly or drop in when it is convenient for you. Respite help may be available.  
For more information contact one of our caregiver support specialists.

### GRAND HAVEN

Every Thursday – 1:00 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.  
Four Pointes Center for Successful Aging  
1051 S. Beacon Blvd., Grand Haven

### HART

Every 3rd Wednesday –  
10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.  
Oceana County Council on Aging  
4250 Tyler Rd., Hart

### MUSKEGON

Every Wednesday – 1:00 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.  
Tanglewood Park  
560 Seminole Rd., Muskegon

### WHITEHALL

Every Tuesday – 1-2:30 p.m.  
White Lake Community Library  
3900 W. White Lake Dr., Whitehall

### JENISON

Every 3rd Friday – 12:30 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.  
GT Connections Senior Center  
7100 8th Ave., Jenison  
616.457.1170

Paula Kolberg

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Muskegon, Michigan

 **Senior Resources**  
*of West Michigan*  
560 Seminole Road  
Muskegon, Michigan 49444-3720  
RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



# MEMORY CAFE

Music, art, gentle movement and community for those affected by memory changes and their caregivers. Refreshments provided. Registration required at **MADL.org/Calendar** →

Scan here to register



**1<sup>st</sup> TUE of the Month | 10:30am** **BEGINS MAR 3**

North Muskegon Branch  
1522 Ruddiman Dr, North Muskegon, MI

