

SeniorHOTLINE

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Senior Series

A partnership between
Ohio State University Extension and
Ohio Aging Network professionals



Tell Me Your Story



"Everyone has a story to tell." If you had a chronic illness, would you be willing to share your story? What would you say? Would it help you to tell? Would hearing your story help others facing a similar chronic illness?

The power of telling one's illness story has been recognized by social scientists for a long time. Arthur W. Frank, Professor of Sociology at the University of Calgary believes these stories are therapeutic for all those involved.

For example, illness stories are healing for those telling the story because they have a chance to be heard. By sharing their story, tellers can unravel the truth of their own experience and begin to adjust to the person they have become.

Illness stories can also benefit others who have a chronic illness. Hearing stories allows them to recognize that they are not alone, and that poor health and sickness can happen to everyone. Listeners will hear similar stories and discover new role models who show them how to actively deal with their illness experience in ways that enrich their lives. They may be encouraged to take a risk and begin talking about their own journey. The result is that both the tellers and the listeners are empowered.

Illness stories are informative for family, friends, and helping professionals outside of the illness experience. Hearing these stories allows those outside of the

experience to develop a deeper appreciation of the illness journey and the traveler.

Dr. Frank describes three main types of illness stories—the restitution, the chaos, and the quest. In our Western culture, a frequent focus is on restoring one's health. "Yesterday I was healthy, today I am sick, but tomorrow I will be healthy again." Because those with chronic illnesses and disabilities don't fit this story-type very well, some may find it too difficult to tell or hear about a story that doesn't appear to have a happy ending.

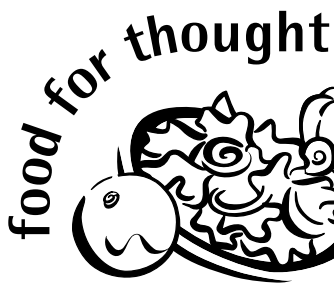
The chaos story is often disjointed and without sequence. The underlying message is that life does not get any better. Close friends and family often find these types of stories very painful and frustrating to listen to. Tellers, however, may find that hearing others' stories can be very supportive. "It's so good to just chat; I no longer feel alone."

The quest type of illness story is when a person perseveres and faces suffering head-on in the belief that something is to be gained from the illness journey. Quest stories search for alternative ways of being.

Is there such a thing as wellness in a life of chronic illness and disability that telling our stories can help discover? The potential is great. Take the risk.

By Kathy Oliver, Extension Educator, Family and Consumer Sciences, Ohio State University Extension, Hardin County. Sources: Kilty, S. (2000). Telling the illness story. The Patient's Network, 5,3. Retrieved May 23, 2005, from <http://www.medhelp.org/www/ais/articles/TELLING.HTM>; and Rollin, B. (2005) Should you tell? AARP The Magazine Online, Retrieved May 23, 2005, from http://www.aarpmagazine.org/health/should_you_tell.html

The New Food Pyramid Is Here!



On April 19, the USDA unveiled MyPyramid, a new symbol and food guidance system replacing the Food Guide Pyramid. The system provides many options to help Americans make healthy food choices and promote active lifestyles.

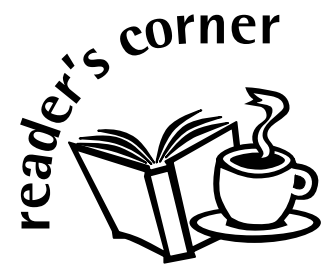
One size doesn't fit all. MyPyramid can assist you with an individualized approach to improve diet and lifestyle by helping you choose the foods and amounts that are right for you. MyPyramid incorporates recommendations from the *2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, which were released in January. The *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* provide advice for people two years of age and older on how to promote health and reduce the risk of chronic disease by adopting proper dietary habits.

The MyPyramid symbol was designed to be simple, and to convey the following messages:

- **Physical activity:** Reminds us of the importance of daily physical activity. This is represented by the steps and the person climbing them.
- **Variety:** Foods from all groups are needed each day for good health. This is symbolized by the six color bands representing the five food groups of MyPyramid and oils.
- **Proportionality:** The widths of the food group bands suggest how much food a person should choose from each group. The widths are a general guide and do not represent exact proportions.
- **Moderation:** The wider base of the food groups stands for foods with little or no solid fats, added sugars, or caloric sweeteners. These foods should be selected more often to get the most nutrients from the calories that are consumed.
- **Gradual Improvement:** Expressed by the slogan, "Steps to a Healthier You." This reminds us that improving our diet and lifestyle is achieved by taking small steps.
- **Personalization:** The MyPyramid web site provides a personalized recommendation of the kinds and amounts of food to eat each day. On the web site www.MyPyramid.gov enter your age, gender, and activity level in the MyPyramid Plan box. You can track your food intake and physical activity level if you click on MyPyramid Tracker.

This is just a brief introduction to MyPyramid. It is a valuable tool in helping us make wise choices today for a healthy tomorrow—and future!

By Jenny Even, Extension Educator,
Family and Consumer Sciences, Ohio State
University Extension, Hamilton County.
Source: www.mypyramid.gov



Purpose and Power in Retirement

By Harold G. Koenig, M.D.

An enjoyable and thoughtful read that briefly covers the history and myths of retirement, challenges faced by some retirees, and the importance of planning for our retirement years. Dr. Koenig specifically addresses purpose and power in retirement. He shares his rationale for why having purpose in retirement is critical and discusses how each of us can find our own purpose.

In one chapter, Dr. Koenig writes about "Cultivate Generosity." He encourages us to be generous with more than our financial resources, by sharing time, friendliness, thankfulness, and praise. In other chapters Dr. Koenig addresses spirituality, stress reduction, and living a healthy lifestyle. Then he closes with ten steps to "purpose and power" in retirement.

This is a wonderful book for those seriously planning for retirement, already enjoying retirement, and even those many years from retirement.

Reviewed by Karen Puterbaugh,
Executive Director, Greene County
Council on Aging.

Our Neighbor, Thelma



Thelma is 88 years young! Her mind is as sharp as a tack and she loves to socialize.

Until recently, she tended a small vegetable garden and grew lots of flowers, but, "No more shoveling snow," she says. "That's for the kids."

All our country neighbors check on her frequently, and plan on spending an hour or more when

they do. My daughter and grandson take her fresh eggs, which she loves. No store-bought eggs for Thelma if she can help it. "Just like when I was a kid on the farm," she says. "I love fresh eggs!"

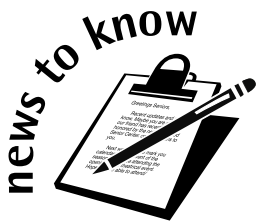
Of course, my young grandson is totally infatuated with her and those stories of when she was a young girl. You know, walking miles to school, working on the farm, no television. "She has fun stories and she's so nice," he says, **every** time he leaves.

Her children see her frequently to take her to dinner and church, to mow or plow—whatever needs done. She says she's a very lucky lady and we all agree. She forgets nothing, loves to laugh, and she's cute!

Thelma is moving to an assisted living facility this summer. We'll still continue to visit and we'll still take her those fresh eggs!

By Deborah Weber, Public Affairs Coordinator, Ohio District 5 Area Agency on Aging, Inc., Mansfield, OH.

Coming Soon! Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage



If you are a Medicare recipient and receive Medicare coverage, you may have received a letter this spring stating that you qualify for new prescription coverage. Despite any confusing press articles you may have read,

Medicare prescription drug coverage is indeed coming in 2006. This coverage represents one of the final enhancements of the Medicare Modernization Act of 2003, and may result in prescription drug savings.

By mid-October 2005, specific details about available prescription coverage plans in Ohio will be mailed to you. Be sure to compare which plan will work best for your medication needs. Remember, enrollment is voluntary and if you have prescription drug coverage available through any retirement benefits, it will be best to compare different plans as more details are published. Most importantly, **November 15, 2005** is a crucial date to mark on your calendars. On that date, you may begin to select and enroll in a Medicare sponsored prescription drug plan of your choosing that will best assist you in paying for your prescription drugs. Currently, specific details for Ohio are not yet available. General guidelines indicate that if you have limited income and financial resources, a subsidy will be made available to assist you with paying the \$37.00 monthly premium per person that will apply.

If your annual income is less than \$14,355 as a single individual or \$19,245 as a married individual, or you or your spouse receive SSI (Supplemental Security Income) and you have limited assets, you will most likely be eligible to receive the subsidy to assist with monthly premiums. If you know you have limited income or resources, ask a trusted family member, caregiver, senior center outreach worker, or OSHIP (The Ohio Senior Health Insurance Information Program) volunteer to assist you. Some application forms have already been mailed out to individuals identified as "limited income." If you need to request an application, call your local Social Security office and request one as soon as possible. You can request that one of the above-mentioned individuals help you complete this application. By mid-October, look for a booklet titled "Medicare and You 2005" to be mailed to you. It will provide details on each state's available plans. If you don't receive one by the end of October, call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227) to request this booklet.

For more information about prescription plans becoming available this fall, go to www.medicare.gov. You may also want to visit the Ohio Department of Aging web site at <http://www.goldenbuckeye.com/benefitscheckup>. This program will assist you with identifying which available prescription drug plan may best meet your needs.

By Jenni Justi, Western Reserve Area Agency on Aging.

Connecting the Generations: Even in a Nursing Home



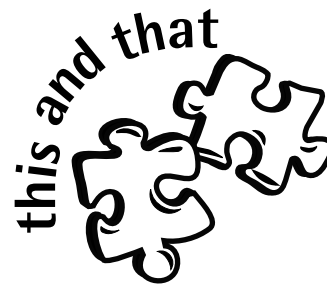
Sometimes when older relatives move to a nursing home, they feel disconnected from family, especially the younger ones. If you have older relatives or family friends who live in nursing homes, plan to visit them this summer and bring some children along. This experience will benefit both

generations. Those who are unsure about bringing young children to a nursing home must keep in mind that children who never spend time with frail older adults often become afraid of them. By visiting with seniors in poor health, children can learn to appreciate and respect age differences. Here are some tips for your next nursing home visit:

- Emphasize that nursing home residents are people just like everyone else.
- Explain that some older adults may be hard of hearing, so it is important to speak clearly without yelling and use eye contact.
- Encourage children to share something about themselves; for example, a picture they drew or a favorite toy.
- Describe the nursing home residents as "Grandmas" and "Grandpas" rather than "elderly" or "old people." Family terms are more familiar to children and avoid negative labeling.
- Encourage children to be affectionate. If a child wants to give a hug or climb in a lap, don't discourage this but be aware of the safety and preference of the older resident.
- Explain that children can help an older adult but they should offer first or wait to be asked for help.
- Be sure to supervise the children but don't interfere. Give the young and old space and time to interact at their own pace.
- Don't be embarrassed by the children's questions. These are natural and not offensive. Most seniors will be amused by them and answer them honestly.

What is most important when visiting a nursing home with children is that you, as the adult, act naturally. If you appear afraid or uncomfortable, a child will pick up on that message. A visit to a nursing home is a great opportunity for the generations to interact. It also gives you a chance to teach young ones about the older members of their community and to emphasize their value.

By Christine Price, Ph.D., OSU Extension State Gerontology Specialist.



Misnomer

Clinging to the screen she was
one single digit morning

A pretty face
and big, bright eyes

Her cry was quite alarming

I took her to a friend that day
for temporary housing

Upon condition I would work
to see to her adoption

The weeks went by
No takers still

The shelters all were crowded

Then, long last,
I took her home

The calico's been adopted!

So Thomas has a sister now
Who should have been called Attila

But, alas, and woe is he
I'd already named her "Willow."

By Judy Hardy, Ohio Department of Aging.

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