

## GRACE COTTAGE FAMILY HEALTH ACHIEVES HIGHEST LEVEL OF PATIENT-CENTERED MEDICAL HOME

**TEAMWORK.** It's important in so many aspects of life, and especially in health-care. We have been working hard to develop the strongest possible team approach to patient care, and we are delighted to announce that Grace Cottage Family Health has achieved Level 3 Patient-Centered Medical Home (PCMH) recognition by the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA). This is the highest level achievable, and it means that Grace Cottage is meeting the most rigorous national guidelines.

Comprehensive, coordinated care is provided at Grace Cottage Family Health according to these NCQA standards:

- Patient-centered access
- Team-based care
- Population health management
- Care management and support
- Care coordination and care transitions
- Performance measures and continuous quality improvement



"The Patient-Centered Medical Home model of care emphasizes the use of coordination and communication to elevate patient care in order to accommodate the needs of each and every patient," said Roger Allbee, Grace Cottage CEO. "It's a long, challenging process to achieve Level 3 PCMH recognition, and we have worked very hard over the last two years to move Grace Cottage up from Level 2. I'm proud of our employees because I know that they're constantly dedicated to the health and well-being of all of our patients."

## GRACE COTTAGE HOSPITAL RANKS IN TOP 20 NATIONALLY

GRACE COTTAGE HOSPITAL has been named a Top 20 Critical Access Hospital for Best Practice – Patient Satisfaction. The National Rural Health Association announced in April that Grace Cottage is in this exclusive "Top 20" ranking out of all 1,339 Critical Access Hospitals in the United States.

The award will be presented at the National Rural Health Association's annual Critical Access Hospital Conference in Kansas City.

The hospitals that achieved "Top 20" ranking scored highest among all Critical Access Hospitals (CAH) on iVantage Health Analytics' Hospital Strength Index™. The Top 20 "Best Practice-Patient Satisfaction" winners are CAHs that have achieved top percentile rank on independently-collected patient surveys which measure "Overall Rating" and "Highly Recommend."

"This is an extraordinary achievement," said Roger Allbee, Grace Cottage CEO. "This does not happen without the involvement and support of all staff as they interact with patients and their families. These results help to prove what has always been true – that our community can count on us to deliver the services they need, now and in the future, in a compassionate and caring way."



## BUILD IT AND THEY WILL COME THE CULTURE OF PATIENT CARE

IT IS AN EXTRAORDINARY HONOR for Grace Cottage to be selected as one of the Top 20 Critical Access Hospitals in the United States for "best practices, patient satisfaction." This is a further reinforcement of the culture that thrives here.

We have received many congratulatory comments from past employees, patients, family members, legislators, and others. One note came from a distinguished architect who has designed medical facilities throughout the Northeast. During time he spent recently conducting a professional analysis of Grace Cottage Family Health, he got to know many of our medical providers and other employees. He wrote: "Grace Cottage is truly a gem when it comes to community-based health care, staff commitment, and overall caring. There is so much to be proud of at Grace Cottage. Your buildings may change over time, just don't change your culture. It is unique and it is what makes Grace Cottage so very special."

This comment is not unique. Many people have said that there's something special going on at Grace Cottage, and we agree. In this

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## BUILD IT AND THEY WILL COME

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day of rapidly-changing healthcare, we continue to provide personalized care, not only for patients, but for their families too. This is practiced by all who work here; no matter what their job is, they have the focus and awareness that the patient always come first.

When Doctor Otis carried on a long line of country doctors and, with vision and drive, created Grace Cottage in 1949, he brought with him and his staff the commitment that comes from being part of a small community. It is a culture where everyone helps their neighbors. From the start, that is what Grace Cottage has been about, and it has survived over 68 years, as it will into the future.

*Roger Allbee, CEO*

## GRACE COTTAGE WELCOMES EILEEN ARAMA

GRACE COTTAGE FAMILY HEALTH welcomes Mental Health Counselor Eileen Arama to its team of 12 medical providers. Eileen is a Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker, offering counseling appointments for adults as well as children ages 7 and up.

Trained at the Gallaudet University School of Social Work in Washington, D.C., Eileen received her Masters of Social Work degree with Honors in May, 2003. She has worked locally at Brattleboro's Austine School for the Deaf, at Sunderland Elementary School, and at the Brattleboro Retreat, in addition to holding other positions in Vermont, Connecticut, and Israel. Her favorite hobby is backpacking, and she has hiked the Appalachian Trail from Georgia to Maine.

Grace Cottage's other full-time mental health medical provider is Benjamin Wright, a board-certified Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner. In addition to providing therapy, Ben manages prescriptions for patients with mental health conditions.

"Too often people with the need for counseling or psychiatric care go without because they cannot find a provider," said Elaine Swift, Practice Director for Grace Cottage Family Health. "With the addition of Eileen, we are pleased to welcome new patients to our behavioral health practice." For more information about mental health services at Grace Cottage, call 802-365-7381.



**DR. MICHELE DOUCETTE**, who has a private practice in Wilmington, VT, is now offering appointments at Grace Cottage one day a week.

"I have seen patients from all over southern Vermont for the past 27 years, and some of them travel quite far for the combination of services I offer," said Michele. "I'm happy for this opportunity to offer a new location to existing patients, and to see new patients as well," she added. "I really appreciate Grace Cottage for their openness to provide patients with alternatives in complementary medicine and integrative care."

Michele received her training at the Southern California University of Health Sciences' Los Angeles College of Chiropractic. She earned her Doctorate in 1989, with summa cum laude distinction. Her continuing education has included courses in nutrition, pediatrics, neurology, craniosacral therapy, and zero balancing, among others. She is a zero balancing instructor and teaches classes to health care professionals internationally.

Michele has been certified by the National Board of Chiropractic Examiners and the Vermont Board of Chiropractic since 1989. To make an appointment with Dr. Michele Doucette, call 802-365-3637.

## WELCOME, EMMA HIGLEY!

**EMMA HIGLEY** joined Grace Cottage in December as Manager of Diagnostic Imaging. Born in Troy, NY, Emma received her business degree from State University of New York's Schenectady County Community College and her degree in Radiologic Technology from Holyoke Community College in Massachusetts. She moved to Vermont in 1989, and was an Imaging Specialist at Brattleboro Memorial Hospital for 11 years before coming to Grace Cottage. She has four grown children, and she enjoys camping, kayaking, bike riding, and baking in her free time.



## WISHES GRANTED...

- ♥ The Fanny Holt Ames & Edna Louise Holt Fund provided funding for the second year of a four-year grant award for Provider Recruitment and Retention and for the expansion of Grace Cottage's Community Health Team.
- ♥ Dick & Mary Ann Byron made a donation for the purchase of a freezer for storage of patient care supplies in the Outpatient Rehabilitation Department.
- ♥ The Richard & Barbara Whitcomb Foundation made a donation that was used to purchase equipment for the Emergency Department.
- ♥ Al & Deb Marzi donated the funds for the purchase of specially-made sheets for more easily and effectively repositioning patients in their beds.
- ♥ Elaine Lambert Klein and John Klein made a donation for the purchase of an Infusion Chair, which has been installed in the new Infusion Room in the hospital.
- ♥ Gunther & Elsie Garbe made a donation for "Arms Up" positioning equipment for patients undergoing CT scans.
- ♥ Dick & Peg Bilda, John & Susan Nardone, Doug & Melanie Pearch, and Paul & Nancy Macht donated funds for the purchase of a freezer for the storage of patient care items, in memory of Jean Stewart.
- ♥ Greg & Jill Dean made a donation in honor of Louise McDevitt and Melissa Walker for the purchase of four sets of fitness steps for use by patients undergoing physical therapy.
- ♥ Suzanne Welch donated the funds to purchase a hands-free binocular magnifier for Grace Cottage Family Health.
- ♥ Faith & Abe Schuster made a donation for the purchase of four posterior splints for use by patients undergoing physical therapy.
- ♥ Elizabeth Walker made a donation in memory of Joan McConnel for the purchase of hanging baskets of annual flowers.

## WISHES MADE...

- ♥ Outpatient Rehab patients would benefit from a VersaSlider to help with balance exercises. \$176.
- ♥ A Figure-8 Board System is needed by the outpatient rehab department therapists, also for balance exercises with patients. \$310.
- ♥ High-powered goose-neck medical exam lights are needed in Grace Cottage Family Health for clinical examinations. \$347.
- ♥ Wireless scanners are needed in the hospital, in order to minimize interruptions as patients are being monitored by nursing staff. \$770.
- ♥ A dedicated sterilization unit for the ultrasound room in Diagnostic Imaging is needed. \$1,505.
- ♥ A Critikon Vital Signs Monitor is needed for patients in rehabilitation therapies. \$3,139.
- ♥ A heavy-duty commercial ice machine is needed for the hospital; it receives constant use. \$3,500.
- ♥ Unused blank notecards and greeting cards are needed so that hospital patients can send cards to friends and family. Drop them off with the receptionist at the Sheila Friedli Entrance of the hospital.

Grace Cottage's Wish List is updated monthly on our website, at [www.gracecottage.org](http://www.gracecottage.org), or call 802-365-9109 for more information.

## EMPLOYEE MILESTONES

### 35 YEARS

Debra Record Billing  
Eloise Winot Environmental Svcs.

### 20 YEARS

Andrea Seaton Foundation

### 15 YEARS

Conn Rose Nursing  
Patricia Winter Rehabilitation

### 10 YEARS

Gretchen Berrie Family Health  
Julie Douglass Nursing  
Crystal Durocher Family Health  
Ruth Fleming Rehabilitation  
C.J. King Foundation  
Desiree Plumley Registration

### 5 YEARS

Danny Ballentine Emergency Dept.  
Jason Bean Information Svcs.  
Holly Domanski Family Health  
Carryn Francis Nursing  
Verna Joslyn Finance  
Christopher Lackney Human Resources  
Holly Meyer Family Health  
Ellen Scialabba Quality  
Raylene Sperling Laboratory  
Stacy Switzer Nursing  
Amy Visser-Lynch Nursing  
Melissa Walker Rehabilitation



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The mission of Grace Cottage is to serve the health care needs of our community; to promote wellness, relieve suffering, and restore health.

# 12<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL TOUR DE GRACE



If you're looking for something fun to do with the entire family this summer in Vermont, you need look no further than Grace Cottage's **Tour de Grace**. This is truly a unique, scenic bicycle ride that's suitable for kids, parents, and grandparents. The mostly-downhill 19-mile route parallels two beautiful rivers, traverses meadows and woodlands, and goes through two picture-perfect Vermont villages (Jamaica and Townshend). There are four refreshment stops (one even includes homemade cinnamon pastries baked by the Three Mountain Inn). The ride is sponsored by Stratton, D&K's Jamaica Grocery, Solstice at Stratton, and Grace Cottage. Registration is open now at [www.gracecottage.org/events](http://www.gracecottage.org/events), or call 802-365-9109.

**Date:** Saturday, July 8, 2017

**Time:** 8-10 a.m. at Stratton; riders usually finish by noon and are transported back up to Stratton

**Donation:** \$25 per rider until July 5th; \$30 at the event



# TEE IT UP FOR HEALTH FRIDAY, JUNE 9

IT'S NOT TOO LATE to sign up for the eighth annual **Tee It Up for Health!** The Hermitage Club at Haystack is a spectacular course, and the \$150 per golfer includes a box lunch, greens fees, cart, logowear, golf balls, contests, and the awards dinner immediately following the tournament, plus a casual BBQ for golfers and sponsors the evening before the tournament, at a beautiful private hillside home in Jamaica, VT. Call 802-365-9109 to register for the tournament, or visit [www.gracecottage.org/events](http://www.gracecottage.org/events). All proceeds benefit Grace Cottage's Patient Care Fund.



## HEALTHY AGING CONFERENCE IN NOVEMBER

GRACE COTTAGE'S SECOND ANNUAL Healthy Aging Conference will be held at The Grafton Inn in Grafton, VT on Tuesday, November 7th, and Wednesday, November 8th, so mark your calendar now and save the date. Following the tremendous success and the enthusiastic feedback we received from participants at last year's Healthy Aging Conference (many of whom want to return for a second round!), we predict that slots will fill quickly. Go to [www.gracecottage.org](http://www.gracecottage.org) for updated information.



## THE VERMONT CHALLENGE

FOR THE THIRD YEAR in a row, Grace Cottage will be a grateful beneficiary of The Vermont Challenge, which has been named one of the Top 10 "Must Do Rides" in 2017 by Under Armour and mapmyride.com. This year's multi-day event will be held August 17-20; more information is available at [vtchallenge.com](http://vtchallenge.com). \$30 of every rider's registration fee is used to support local Vermont charities. Thank you, Vermont Challenge!

*the Vermont*   
**CHALLENGE**  
*are you up for the challenge?*

# AUXILIARY NEWS

## 67<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL HOSPITAL FAIR DAY

SATURDAY, AUGUST 5, 2017

TOWNSHEND COMMON, 9 A.M. – 5 P.M.

ADMISSION: FREE ♦ PARKING: FREE ♦ ENTERTAINMENT: FREE

**IT SHOULD COME AS NO SURPRISE** to anyone who's been to Hospital Fair Day that it's been named one of Vermont's Top Summer Events by the Vermont Chamber of Commerce. Here's a list of things you won't want to miss at this year's Fair Day:

**ART SHOW** – Local artists sell their work to benefit Grace Cottage; located in the Townshend Church.

**AUCTION** – Pick up a bidding number and furnish your house or college dorm room, or buy those one-of-a-kind items that you won't see anywhere else.

**BAKED GOODS BOOTH** – take home a homemade pie or two (they freeze well). The varieties are endless and all are delicious. Brownies, cookies, and other hand-held goodies are available too.

**BALLOONS AND POPCORN** – enhance the day with a colorful balloon and a bag of freshly-made popcorn.

**BINGO** – come and go as you please, but stay all day for the best chance at great prizes!

**BOOK BOOTH** – snag a rare first edition, buy your beach books, and pick up gifts for the holidays. Can't beat the prices!

**BIRTHDAY PARADE WITH STORK AND TACONIC BAGPIPERS** – 10 a.m. sharp. Join in if you were born at Grace Cottage or in the West River Valley!

**CHICKEN BBQ** – starts at 4 p.m., buy your tickets on the Common during the day, before they sell out.

**CIRCUS** – the New England Center for Circus Arts performers entertain at half-hour intervals mid-day. Awe-inspiring for all ages.

**CORN-ON-THE-COB & WATERMELON** – fresh local vegetable and fruit. Healthy and wholesome...and delicious!

**COSTUMES & FACE PAINTING** – this booth is always a hit with the kids, and it's so much fun to see Pirates and Princesses all over the Townshend Common!

**FOOD BOOTH** – Egg sandwiches and coffee in the morning, with hamburgers, hot dogs, sausage sandwiches, onion rings and French fries. It's Fair Day food, who can resist?

**FRIED DOUGH BOOTH** – bet you can't pass this one by. Lathered with butter, cinnamon, powdered sugar, or marinara sauce. Come on, it's only once a year, right?!

**GOURMET BOOTH** – a wide array of fresh, homemade salads, casseroles, side dishes, other delectable items are available for your lunchtime pleasure.

**HOLE-IN-ONE** – go for the \$1,000 prize offered by People's United Bank. 9 a.m.-3p.m.

**HOUSEHOLD ITEM BOOTH** – this booth is one of everyone's favorites. Things you didn't know you needed, things you did know you needed, gifts, knickknacks, treasures of all kinds. We can just about guarantee that you can't browse this booth without buying something!

**ICE CREAM** – you can hear the old-fashioned ice cream maker cranking away all day to make delicious homemade vanilla and chocolate.

**JEWELRY BOOTH** – earrings, bracelets, necklaces galore, of all shapes, styles, colors and sizes.

**LEMONADE** – fresh and homemade, just what the doctor ordered for a hot summer's day!

**MAPLE COTTON CANDY & SNOW CONE BOOTH** – put the word "maple" together with "Cotton Candy" or "Snow Cones" – who can resist?

**MUSIC** – a variety of performers entertain throughout the day for your listening pleasure.

**PLANTS** – a wide variety of annuals and perennials at reasonable prices. Fill your garden!

**PONY RIDES** – Free for kids, 1-3 p.m.

**TOY BOOTH** – always fun finds for your infants, toddlers, children, grandchildren. Games, puzzles, etc. for the older "kids" in the family.

– Laura Smith

President, Grace Cottage Auxiliary & Fair Day Chairperson



## THANK YOU!

**Hospital Fair Day** wouldn't be the amazing event that it is without your donations of so many wonderful items, and your gift of time to put it all together! It's thanks to you that we're able to raise about \$50,000 in ONE DAY, after expenses, for specific

items needed for patient care at Grace Cottage. Your donated items, volunteer time, and attendance at Fair Day are all so very appreciated. Call me at (802) 365-9992 or e-mail [lauras9992@svcable.net](mailto:lauras9992@svcable.net) to arrange for donation of items, or to sign up to volunteer (there are many volunteer opportunities before, during, and the day after Fair Day).

– Laura Smith  
Fair Day Chairperson



## LEAVE A LEGACY AT GRACE COTTAGE WITH A BEQUEST

**M**ANY PEOPLE WHO SUPPORT Grace Cottage through annual donations have also honored the care that they and loved ones have received by including Grace Cottage in their estate planning.

Elaine Lambert Klein of Newfane is one of many who have added Grace Cottage as a beneficiary of estate planning.

“My husband Jack and I moved full-time to our home in Vermont in 2004, after we both retired from Pfizer in Groton, CT. We retired young, so we thought we had plenty of time together, but Jack was diagnosed with pancreatic and liver cancer in 2007. Despite treatment, his cancer spread and, in January 2010, he died in the Grace Cottage Hospice Suite, with family and friends by his side.

“It was such an incredibly sad and difficult

time, but everyone at Grace Cottage was so caring and so compassionate. I was barely aware of anything other than my lovely husband, and the staff not only took care of all his needs, but they also extended amazing care to all who were there with us.

“In thanks for this care, I have designated a specific amount in my will for Grace Cottage’s Hospice Care. It was simple to do, and it will help to ensure that patients who need end-of-life care can have the same quality of care that Jack did. I encourage you to consider a bequest for this wonderful rural healthcare center too!”

*Elaine M Lambert*  
NEWFANE, VT

P.S. I’ve since remarried, and my husband, John Klein, and I continue to make annual and Wish List donations to Grace Cottage.

*For a confidential discussion about including Grace Cottage in your estate plans, call Andrea Seaton at 802-365-9109.*



Jack & Elaine Lambert



Elaine Lambert & John Klein

### A grateful patient writes:

“After I had a heart procedure at Dartmouth-Hitchcock, I came to Grace Cottage because I had heard a lot of good things about the care here. This place is like an oasis in the desert. The care was unbelievably focused on me. I never met any employee who didn’t know what to do and who didn’t step in to help. The staff members all fit together like a family and this is also how they treat patients – just like family.

Grace Cottage has a very interesting history and a good mission, and this hospital is exactly what its mission statement says it is. You really do put patients first. I’ve been in a lot of hospitals, and other places try to do this, but it doesn’t come across. Grace Cottage is very unique and more people need to know about you!”

*Ken Moulton*  
WESTON, VT



### A grateful patient writes:

“I was a patient at Grace Cottage for five weeks this spring, and every employee I came in contact with during that entire time was so happy and so helpful, including dietary, housekeeping and laundry staff, nurses, doctors, and therapists. Nurses always answered my call bell promptly, whether it was day or night. The hospital is so clean and the food is great. I had a very pleasant stay!”

*Joan Bourque*  
BONDVILLE, VT



## CABIN FEVER ONLINE AUCTION

We want to extend our appreciation to all who participated in Grace Cottage's Cabin Fever Online Auction in February. Thanks to businesses and individuals who generously donated a wide variety of auction items, and to those who placed bids, over \$11,000 was raised for Grace Cottage's Patient Care Fund. Our next Cabin Fever Online Auction will be held February 19-28, 2018. Stay tuned!



### A grateful patient writes:

“Thank you so much for the wonderful care from all of the staff members at Grace Cottage. I appreciated all the sunny faces every day!”

*Nancy Wright*  
CHARLESTOWN, NH



FAMILY HEALTH & HOSPITAL

Grace Cottage Hospital & Grace Cottage Foundation are 501(c)3 nonprofit organizations. The mission of Grace Cottage Foundation is to raise funds on behalf of Grace Cottage.

Donations to Grace Cottage Foundation are tax deductible to the extent allowable by law. Grace Cottage Foundation's Federal Tax ID # is: 03-0343282.

Donations may be made by cash, credit card, check, stocks, bonds, or other tangible assets. Call Andrea Seaton, Executive Director, at (802) 365-9109.

An audit of Grace Cottage Hospital & Grace Cottage Foundation is available upon request.

## RACHEL STETTLER JOINS FOUNDATION BOARD

IT IS WITH GREAT PLEASURE that we welcome Rachel Friis Stettler to the Grace Cottage Foundation Board. A graduate of Princeton University, Rachel received her Masters from the Parsons School of Design, and received a Klingenstein Fellowship in Private School Leadership from Columbia University. Until her retirement in 2016, she was the Head of School at The Winsor School in Boston, MA, where she led their recent capital campaign. Prior to Winsor, Rachel was the principal of Fieldston School in Riverdale, NYC. In 1996-1999, she was the Founding Director of CITYterm at the Masters School in New York City; she began her career at the Montclair Kimberley Academy in Montclair, NJ.



Rachel and her husband, David, who is head of the Fessenden School in Newton, MA, own a home in Townshend, and are the parents of two grown sons. Now that Rachel is retired, she hopes to have more time to devote to hiking, bicycling, skiing, and continuing to play the cello in various ensembles and symphony orchestras.

### GIFTS WERE RECENTLY RECEIVED IN HONOR OF:

Dr. Kimona Alin ❖ Jesse Ardine ❖ Dr. Robert Backus  
Dennis & Judy Buttinger ❖ Denise Choleva ❖ Ken & Phyllis Emery  
Dr. Maurice Geurts ❖ Grace Cottage Information Services Department  
Grace Cottage volunteers ❖ Louise McDevitt ❖ Melissa Walker

### ❖ MEMORIAL GIFTS ❖

*Donations have been received between January 1, 2017, and April 25, 2017 in memory of the following individuals:*

Martha Banziruk ❖ Theresa Baribeau ❖ Mollie Beattie ❖ Susan Bristol  
Irene Brooks ❖ Gladys Brown ❖ Bill Cobb ❖ Chris Coleman ❖ Phil Coleman  
Ralph Coleman ❖ Vincent Del Vecchio ❖ Earl Douglass ❖ Betty Druke  
John & Geraldine Easton ❖ Stephen Fitzpatrick ❖ Eric Griffiths ❖ Jim Heal  
George & Thelma Holden ❖ George Holden, Jr. ❖ Luetta Holden ❖ Julia Holland  
❖ Stan Holt ❖ Robert Jones ❖ Dorothy Kingsley ❖ Richard Lapan  
Maurice Laselle ❖ Melissa Lipiani ❖ Barbara Litchfield ❖ Joan McConnel  
Dawn McCormick ❖ Art Monette ❖ Florence Moore ❖ Lisa Young Noble  
Kim Perry ❖ Irene Phelps ❖ Elaine Prouty ❖ William & Florence Rounds  
Willie & Edie Rounds ❖ Jean Stewart ❖ Catherine N. Stratton ❖ Chip Walker  
Bud & Irene Wenker ❖ Jack Winner ❖ Carl Woodard ❖ Pauline Wright

*We extend our sympathy to the families and friends of these loved ones, and our appreciation to those who have given in their memories. When memorial gifts are received by Grace Cottage, the donor is thanked, and the next of kin is notified of the gift. (The amount given is never divulged.)*

## A grateful patient writes:

“The care at Grace Cottage is incredible – very top shelf, and the range of services that you offer is just amazing. When I moved to this area, I heard from friends and neighbors that it’s a ‘Gem in the Woods’, and now, after my many personal experiences, I know it’s true.”

*Rich Downing*  
WILLIAMSVILLE, VT

## OPT OUT

**WAIT! PLEASE!** If you’re throwing this newsletter into the recycling bin without reading it, please let us know so that we can remove you from our mailing list. Or would you rather receive this newsletter via e-mail? Either way, contact us at [info@gracecottage.org](mailto:info@gracecottage.org) or call 802-365-9109 to let us know. The money saved on printing and postage costs will be used for patient care!



FAMILY HEALTH & HOSPITAL

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## TIPS FOR RELIEVING STRESS

BY ELIZABETH HARRISON, GRACE COTTAGE HEALTH COACH

**YOU PROBABLY KNOW** already that too much stress can make you sick. Chronic stress puts a tremendous load on your body, increasing your risk of getting a host of diseases.

And no doubt, you have direct experience with stress. We all lead busy lives, and it can be challenging to take time for self-care. It’s important, though, and I would like to offer a few simple stress reduction techniques that can make a huge difference. None of these are time-consuming or costly, and they don’t require any special equipment.

One of the fastest ways to reduce stress is simply to stand up and stretch tall. It’s free and easy, and you’ll feel a huge difference!

Do you have trouble falling asleep? That’s a pretty good indication that your stress level is too high. Your body is like a battery or a cell phone, in that it needs regular times of rest to recharge itself. Sleep is a way of plugging your body into its power source, which will help you keep your stress levels manageable. Doing some gentle stretches, reading an uplifting book, or listening to soothing music can help you relax before bedtime.

The body needs good nutrition as well. It may be tempting to use alcohol, tobacco, sugar, or other substances to reduce stress, but these will not help you in the long run. Give your body good fuel, including lots of fruits and vegetables each day. And remember to chew everything slowly and until mushy!

Any kind of physical activity, from yoga to running, can also help. Yoga is especially popular because it combines stretching and poses with deep breathing, and it can lead to a meditative state of

mind. Whether you do this in a class, or in the convenience of your own home, yoga-like movements can calm your mind and help you sleep better.

Here’s another tip I offer to my clients, perhaps the hardest of all: take time to sit still and quietly every day, even if it’s just for a few minutes. Yes, it’s true, the mind will naturally wander when we try to meditate. That’s okay. You can use a guided meditation tape, or prayer, or controlled breathing, or some other practice to help bring you back to the present moment and away from your to-do list for a little while.

Other helpful stress-reducing techniques include journaling, playing music, visiting with friends, gardening and other hobbies, watching comedies, or hanging out with friends. Social connections and a healthy dose of self-acceptance—all of these can do wonders, with little cost in time or money, and with great reward.

*Elizabeth Harrison is a Board Certified Clinical Nutritionist. As a member of the Grace Cottage Community Health Team, Harrison provides resources and skills to develop healthy habits, and runs monthly support groups. The services of the Grace Cottage Community Health Team are free for all Grace Cottage patients and local community members.*

