



# The Upbeat

January 2022, Volume 5



To all our members,

Happy New Year! At any age, January is a time to plan for the new year, set goals, and get off to a fresh start. In this issue of Upbeat we have gathered some helpful strategies and tips for making 2022 a year of increasing health and wellbeing. Learn how to engineer new habits, and enjoy top healthy aging tips from our outstanding team of Allies, your dedicated aging professionals. Positive change is possible at any age!

I would also like to introduce to you our new Age Assured Wellness Director, Dr. Michal Herz. Michal brings over 20 years experience in the field of aging to her new role: helping us determine what we can do to make your journey in aging a success. Michal will be a frequent contributor to Upbeat and I hope you will enjoy hearing her voice in future issues. She is passionate, extremely well-informed, and delightful. Learn more about Michal in our brief interview with her on page 5.

Last but not least, a Happy New Year to all of our caregivers! For you we have tips from one of our experienced Allies to brighten winter doldrums and avoid caregiver burnout. The Covid pandemic has been horrific, but one silver lining is that it has highlighted the plight of our nation's 48 million unpaid caregivers – and how vital they are to our wellbeing, our economy, and our country. At different points in our lives we will likely all be called upon to give or receive care in amounts that are difficult to bear. I am proud that Assured Allies is one of many institutions, public and private, that are working today to better support both those who need care and their caregivers with the tools, information, and human touch that they both need to thrive and age successfully in 2022 and beyond.

**Mark Friedman**

VP Services & Operations, Assured Allies

# Create new habits to turn your life around - at any age



By Katharine de Baun. Katharine is passionate about promoting Successful Aging in her job as content manager at Assured Allies.

After a cross-country move last fall, I decided to change my long standing habit of leaving dirty dinner dishes in the sink overnight. For a week or so, I made a conscious effort to clean up after dinner, even when I felt tired. My reward was coming downstairs the next morning and enjoying the clean, bright kitchen: ah! It felt good.

A few weeks later, I was in the middle of scrubbing a pot after dinner when I realized, wow! I am cleaning up automatically now. I didn't have to remind or force myself to do it. It was as if I were on autopilot – my body did the work while my mind was free to wander about.

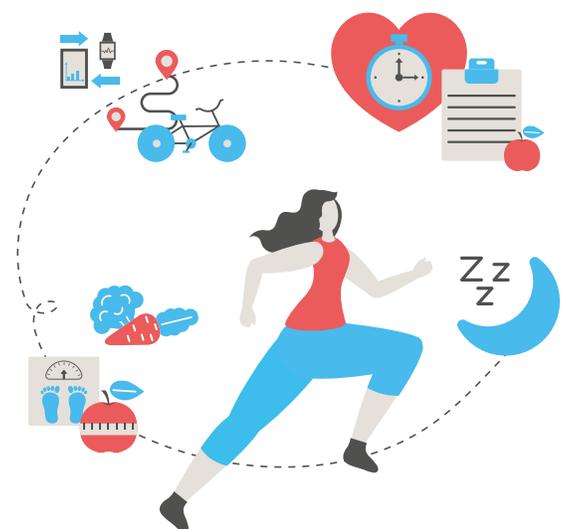
Pulitzer-Prize winning Charles Duhigg's bestselling book, "The Power of Habit" showed me that what I had stumbled into was the creation of a new habit. Habits are powerful because they unconsciously govern behavior and conserve our brains' energy. You probably have good habits, like brushing your teeth before bed, and, if you're like me, not-so-good habits that you'd like to change. Duhigg's book empowers anyone – at any age – to choose their habits rather than accumulate them by chance. Just because a bowl of ice cream made you feel really good one night in 1982 doesn't mean you have to mindlessly eat one every night forever after!

But wait a minute. Aren't older adults less able to form new habits than younger adults? No! Older adults have a strong advantage: "They know what makes them happy much better than younger people, and once they achieve a change, they don't go back," says Duhigg.

So how do you change a habit? Any habit, good or bad, involves three elements: a cue, a routine, and a reward. To change a habit, change the routine. In my example, the cue, finishing dinner, remained the same. It was the routine that changed: I cleaned up instead of leaving a mess (before it became a habit, I had to use my willpower to do this). As for the reward, my old habit had an immediate one: plopping in a chair to watch TV. My new habit had a delayed reward, the joy of waking up to a clean kitchen.

Duhigg suggests two ways to boost new habits. Piggybacking on a larger change – the start of a New Year, or even a rearrangement of your living room furniture – can help. In my case, the disruption of moving probably made it easier to start new habits. Associating your new habit with a belief, particularly one that goes beyond yourself, is also powerful. You could use your faith, your love for your family, or a dedication to a cause as motivation to stick to your new habit, particularly in times of stress when it's tempting to revert back to old patterns.

What about you? I hope Duhigg's research empowers you to engineer any new habits you'd like in 2022!



# Our Favorite Healthy Aging Tips for 2022

By Age Assured Allies, professional aging experts who help our members age in place. Note: All health recommendations are dependent on your personal health, so always talk to your doctor for guidance.



## Allie Petznick

Allie is a certified Mayo Clinic wellness coach with a B.S. in dietetics. She is passionate about helping older adults maintain a joyful and active lifestyle.

## Practice mindfulness and gratitude

Support your mental health and wellbeing all year long with this short and simple meditation. Sit comfortably with your lower back supported, and set a timer for five minutes. Close your eyes, focus on your breath, and, until the timer goes off, repeat a positive affirmation or think of something that brings you joy. Open your eyes and observe how you feel after this break from everyday worries. Remind yourself of this peaceful release throughout your day.

## Support your immune system

Three tips to keep your immune system in tip-top shape in 2022!

- Drink more water: Water is free and it supports every function in your body, especially the immune system.
- Increase your movement: Marching in place or seated chair exercises can be done from the comfort of home if it's challenging to get out.
- Get more rest: Arrange your schedule so you can sleep in or take an afternoon nap. Enjoy that time and don't feel guilty for resting.



## Lisa Tinker

Lisa has been a National Academy of Sports Medicine certified health coach for 16 years and has a B.S. in Exercise Science and Kinesiology. She has helped older adults live independently for over five years.

## Eat small portions throughout the day

Instead of eating three large meals, try “grazing” with smaller meals every three hours. It helps to maintain blood sugar levels and speeds up your metabolism, which supports weight management. Feeling satisfied by more frequent meals will also help you to avoid reaching for unhealthy snacks.





### **Kasaundra Bennett**

*Kasaundra is an ACE (American Council on Exercise) certified health coach with a B.S. in Nutrition and Dietetics. She is passionate about preventative health and empowering older adults to age successfully.*

## **Bottoms up!**

Staying hydrated is an essential building block to good health. The recommendation for all adults is generally eight cups (64 oz.) of fluid intake a day to ensure good circulation, joint lubrication and optimally functioning organs. Adequate hydration also prevents confusion, dizziness, and fatigue. Plain water is always great, and you can also increase fluid intake with:

- Soups, stews or broth
- Sugar popsicles, smoothies and milkshakes
- Slices of fresh fruit or lemon to spruce up a glass of water – or dilute juice
- Fresh fruits and vegetables

## **Count your zzzzz's**

The average adult needs 7-9 hours of sleep a night. Getting a good night's rest can help to decrease falls and accidents, improve memory and uplift mood. Support your sleep with these simple before-bed routines:

- Follow a sleep schedule by going to bed and waking up at the same time everyday.
- Develop a bedtime routine. Take some time to wind down and do something that relaxes you. Take a relaxing bath or shower, light a candle and listen to music, read a book, or relax in silence to reflect on the day.
- Avoid caffeine in the afternoon. Try decaf if you crave a hot drink.
- Stay away from screens an hour before your bedtime. The blue light can stimulate you and keep you awake.



## **MemberSpeak**

*What is your favorite time of the day?*

“The evening. It is usually when I am done making trips out for the day and I get to watch games on television. Also I get to sit in a big chair and put my feet up.” **Janis D., age 92**

“Definitely not the morning. I am a night person. My mom was a night person, too. I would go over to visit her in the evening thinking she would be asleep, but no, she was awake, picking away at something in her wheelchair. My dad used to go to bed early, around 8:00 pm, but my mom and I were the night people. I get my best work done at night.” **Mabel J., age 91**

“Early mornings. I rise between 3:30-4:00 am and enjoy the stillness. I make coffee, let the cat out for the day, and sweep off the deck. I fill my bird feeders and watch the birds eat and splash in the bird bath. Getting up early allows me to spend the day doing what I love the most, gardening in my flower beds.” **Margaret, age 77**

For our next issue, we're looking for members to answer the question, "What does spring mean to you?" Please reach out to your Ally to send in your answer or email us at [newsletter@assuredallies.com](mailto:newsletter@assuredallies.com).

# Introducing Wellness Director Michal Herz

*After twenty years of working passionately on dementia and aging in the non-profit sector, Dr. Michal Herz chose Assured Allies as one of the best ways to support successful aging.*

## What's your role at Assured Allies?

My main role is to overlook the Age Assured program – which helps our members to age successfully in their homes for a longer period of time. It's a stable program clinically and technologically and we have a great team of Allies who work with our members.

## Given your background in the non-profit sector, your arrival seems like an especial validation of what many say, that they chose Assured Allies because the company's business model is aligned with a mission to do real good in the world.

I have been in the field of aging my whole career, celebrating 20 years this December. Nineteen of those years I worked in the non-profit sector across a variety of roles, from academic research to project management to policy work. Assured Allies is the first time that I've seen a business combine the speed, funding, and technology of a commercial enterprise with the systematic and altruistic thinking of a non-profit. The combination is fascinating. I was tired of big organizations that move slowly.

I also think there's a unique opportunity for Assured Allies to be a kind of catalyst for successful aging.

## How so?

I spent a lot of my career in the U.K., Israel, and at the World Health Organization (WHO), and the perception of human rights, caregiving, and healthcare is very different in the United States. The private sector plays a much bigger role. As a private company, we can move quickly and take calculated risks on a smaller scale. It's a blessing that private insurance carriers in the U.S. are investing in finding methods to support aging in place and see whether our model of long-term care non-medical intervention works. It's what everybody all over the world is saying they want, and research globally supports the idea that aging in place is the best option for individuals and society.

## How does Assured Allies help?

We use our expertise and experience to help older adults and caregivers map the situation, plan ahead, and adjust as needed so that our members age in place and enjoy the highest quality of life for as long as possible. I'm excited about how I can combine my experience in the field of psychology and aging with Assured Allies' highly capable team of Allies and network of resources to help our members age successfully in place.



## Caregiver Corner | New Year Reflections



By Alexandra Pritkin-Morin, an Age Assured Ally who is passionate about assisting older adults in maintaining a joyful and active lifestyle.

January is a great time for caregivers to set new intentions and goals for the coming year. How can you minimize stress and find time for yourself in 2022? Reflect back on the previous year and consider where you are headed now, what is going well (congratulations!), and what is becoming increasingly difficult to manage. If you anticipate that daily living activities will require more support, identify what you can manage on your own and which tasks you'd like more help with. Widening your circle of support is a significant task in and of itself: write down a Plan A, B, and C to steer your efforts.

And what about caregiving – for yourself? Get enough rest: allow yourself to sleep in or take a delicious afternoon nap once in a while. Feeling lonely? Tap up your social network as needed with a Zoom happy hour, a book club, a game night, or a crafting group. And don't forget that you have a body: sustain or increase your own strength and vitality (and ability to get things done!) with regular exercise. A new year is a great time to explore something new – a session with a personal trainer, a new game like pickleball (which doubles as social time), or a fun-themed obé workout (obefitness.com).

Last but not least, know that if you feel underappreciated, you probably are. More than 48 million Americans are unpaid caregivers who are often too overwhelmed and exhausted to advocate on their own behalf. Knowing you're not alone can be a great solace and source of hope for eventual change – share your struggles and learn from others' by joining a caregiver support group, or gain a broad horizon for your experience by reading "Already Toast: Caregiving and Burnout in America" by Kate Washington.

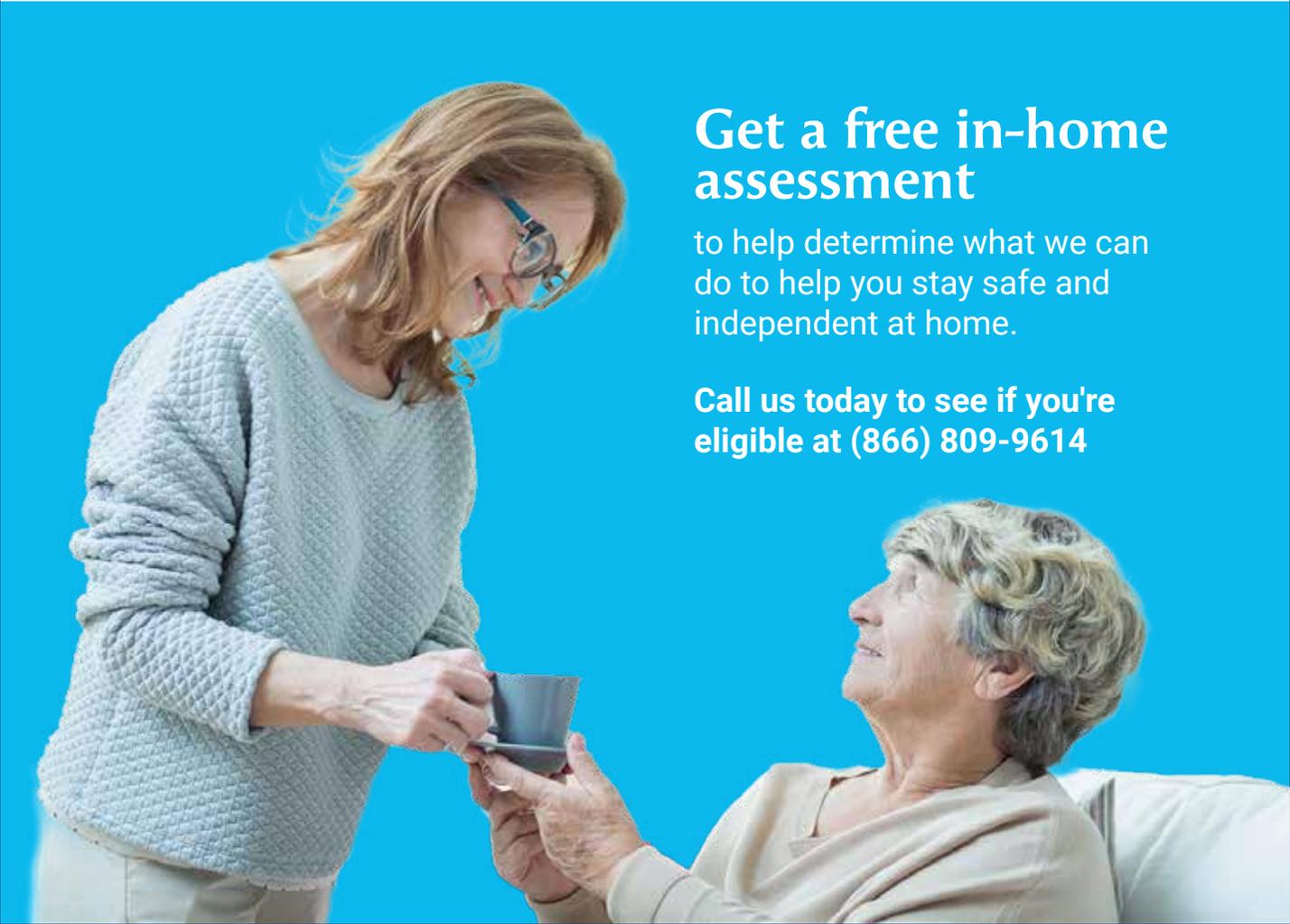
At Assured Allies, we appreciate and value everything you do as a caregiver and wish you a happy and prosperous 2022!



### Brighten Winter Doldrums

If cold weather has your loved one cooped up inside, here are some ideas to keep their spirits up:

- Let holidays linger: There is no law against playing holiday music and keeping decorations up and lights shining well into January and beyond if they inspire joy and fond memories.
- Embrace natural light: Keep blinds open during the day to encourage everyone's circadian rhythms and lift mood. Set up a comfy chair near a window where you or your loved one can sit and soak in the sunlight.
- Grow indoor plants: Greenery inside contrasts nicely with winter's spare palette outside. Plants are rewarding to care for and a wonderful focus for interaction. How about an air plant that your loved one can spritz daily with water, a potted lemon tree, or a tropical plant?



## Get a free in-home assessment

to help determine what we can do to help you stay safe and independent at home.

**Call us today to see if you're eligible at (866) 809-9614**

### EDITOR'S NOTE

We hope you enjoyed this edition of "The Upbeat." Feel free to share this newsletter with your friends, family and neighbors as well.

We welcome any feedback, comments, or questions you may have. Please reach out to us at [newsletter@assuredallies.com](mailto:newsletter@assuredallies.com). If you prefer to receive this newsletter in electronic format, contact us as well.