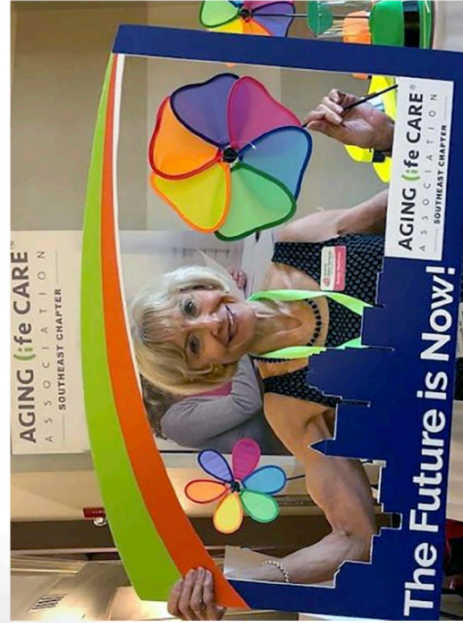


work-life balance

Finding Balance Through Service and Self-Care

Karen Wolfrom Empowers Clients to Engage Life By Her Own Example



Wolfrom uses her free time to stay connected with community by participating in events such as the Aging Life Care Association conference.

For Karen Wolfrom, balance doesn't mean a tidy division of hours between work and personal life. Instead, it's a deliberate weaving together of service, movement, community, and spiritual grounding. As the founder and president of Holistic Elder Services, Wolfrom supports older adults in Western North Carolina through highly personalized care management. Her work ranges from accompanying clients to physician appointments and managing medications to advocating for them in hospital settings and even helping with

legacy projects that honor their life stories. It's an emotionally demanding role, one that requires constant availability and deep reserves of compassion. "My main thing is keeping them out of the hospital, and keeping them in getting a good quality of life, keeping them as active as possible, for as long as possible," Wolfrom said. "I try to eliminate suffering for my clients and help preserve their relationships with adult children and extended family members." She has built her career on the conviction

that older adults are valuable, wise, and worthy of advocacy.

That dedication could easily lead to burnout, but Wolfrom has constructed a framework for balance that supports her both physically and emotionally. At the center of that framework is active movement, often through classes at her local YMCA. "I'm at the Y 13 to 16 hours a week," she said. She schedules clients' appointments around her exercise classes when possible, fitting in yoga, Pilates, Zumba, swimming, and cardio.

Far from being another item on her to-do list, this routine gives her the grounding she needs. "Yoga, you know, a lot of it is breathing and just being in the moment, so it helps you stay focused," she said. "It helps your body and mind relax. And we know that when we get enough relaxation and it's very kind of targeted relaxation, then we can be more creative. We can be energized."

Her strategies are practical as well as philosophical. Sleep, nutrition, socialization, and exercise are non-negotiables, as is her Sunday church attendance, which she considers part of her spiritual balance. Flexibility is key, but so is persistence—Wolfrom doesn't allow one missed class or one emergency call to derail her longer-term habits.

Her definition of balance includes not only self-care but also staying intellectually stimulated and connected to colleagues. She participates in national Aging Life Care Association calls with other solo practitioners, attends conferences, and

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Karen balances her free time with exercise classes at the YMCA.

keeps up with new research in aging and dementia. "Sometimes I'm best when I'm learning new information," she says. "So when I'm getting kind of tired, if I learn something new, it creates some excitement." Community also plays an essential role. Wolfrom serves on nonprofit boards, volunteers in aging-related initiatives, and makes small, everyday efforts to encourage others—whether it's praising an instructor at the Y or complimenting a hotel housekeeper. "It doesn't cost anything," she says. "And it makes me feel better that hopefully I've made them feel better."

With more than four decades in healthcare—as a nurse, hospice case manager, director, educator, and now care manager—Wolfrom has built her professional life around caregiving. But her personal life reflects the same ethic of intentionality and balance. Whether she's walking her dog, playing piano to keep her mind sharp, or attending a church service, Wolfrom is living out



Wolfrom schedules appointments to allow for exercise classes when possible.

the same philosophy she encourages her clients to adopt: keep moving, keep connecting, and keep learning. ■



Karen Wolfrom is the Founder and President of Holistic Elder Services. Visit HolisticElderServices.com.

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