

SELF CARE

TAKING CARE OF YOU!

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*Everybody who thinks life is
complicated:*

Hold up your hand!

Who Is Providing Care?

- 21% of households provide care to an elderly person in a 12-month period (Met Life, 2004).
- 25% to 35% of workers report that they are currently providing, or have recently provided, care to someone 65+ (Families and Work Institute, 2002).
- Two-thirds report having to rearrange work schedule, decrease their hours or take an unpaid leave (Health & Human Services, 1998).

Caregiver Stress

- Caregivers are more likely to report themselves “in poor health” than general population.
- 25% of care receivers are either bedridden or use wheelchairs, resulting in caregiver muscle strain/back pain.
- An estimated 46% of caregivers show signs of clinical depression.

Caregiver Assistance Statistics

- About one-half of all caregivers receive no outside assistance whatsoever.
- Only an estimated 10% to 20% of all family caregivers use services through public or private agencies.

What Are Common Caregiver Stresses?

- Resistant, Angry Care Receiver
- Long Distance Caregiving
- Legal Matters
- Family Disagreement(s)
- Physical Care Needs
- Care Supervision Needs
 - Memory Problems
- Life, Health, Safety Concerns
 - Driving
 - Refusal of Medical Assessment/Treatment
- A Need for a Move to More Supportive Housing
- Money, Money, Money (not enough)
- Poor/Ineffective Medical Care
- Difficult Caregiver Feelings, like:
 - Frustration/Anger
 - Guilt
 - Depression
- Change
- Uncertainty

Needs of Caregivers

- Information
- Respite
- Support

Barriers

- Education
- Isolation
- Trust
- Finances
- Caring for self

Education

Information on the illness

- Tricks, communication skills
- Care strategies
 - Back care
 - Bathing

Talking to MD/other professionals

Learning the system/accessing services

Emotional Health

- Respite
- Help with Caregiving
- Support for Feelings
- Maintaining a life outside of caregiving
- Resilience

Isolation

- Feelings of abandonment
- Not knowing how/who to ask for help
- Family conflict
- Loss of social supports
- Physical limitations
 - Chronic illness of caregiver
 - Depression
 - Substance abuse

Grief and Loss

- Ambiguous loss
 - Loss of future
 - Loss of who the person was
 - Loss of chance to “make it right”
 - Loss of role

Support

- Prayer/meditation
- Talking to others
 - Family
 - Friends
 - Support groups
 - Professionals

GUILT

- “I should”
 - No one will do as good a job as I do
 - Fear something will happen if you are away
- Guilt vs Regret
- Being “Perfect” is a set up for failure
 - I am not in perfect control of my emotions
- Do I deserve to have a good time if my loved one is suffering?
- Thinking about my needs is selfish
- Ambivalence

Creativity

- Think outside your comfort zone. Collect ideas from everyone who has been in your situation and everyone who hasn't.
- Try them
 - Either they will work or they won't
 - What is the worst thing that can happen?
 - If they don't work, try something else

What about Asking for Help?



Are you willing to ask for help?

- Have you asked for help before?
- Are other family members undependable or unwilling?

Developing a Help Network: Never Pass up an Opportunity

Getting to “yes”

- Always accept offers of assistance from family/friends/neighbors you trust.
- Prepare a list of jobs others can do
- Request help with care for dependent family member **and for self**

Consider Asking for Ongoing/Regular Help

- Little things on a regular basis can mean a lot.
- Household chores can be easy to do by others and can be scheduled.
- Accept offers of ongoing assistance even if you feel you need more.

Caregiver Self Care: Body

- Exercise
- Eat Right
- Enough sleep
- Go to the doctor for own care
- Teaching caregivers to accept that:

Taking care of you is the best gift you can give your loved one

Care of Self

- Getting systems to pay attention to your needs and concerns
- Admit to own needs
 - Own medical care, risks due to caregiving
 - Respite
- Not knowing how to receive offers of help
- Dealing with other family members
- Depression/stress

Setting Limits

- Asking for and accepting help
 - *God won't let you die until you learn to receive*
 - Say “thank you”
- Saying no to requests that are draining
- Find opportunities where you feel in control
- Evaluate what you can do
- Re-evaluate what you can or are able to do

Stress: A Primer

- **Stress = Survival**
- **Sympathetic & Parasympathetic Nervous System**
- **Link Between Stress and Disease**
- **Adrenaline & Cortisol Levels**

Timothy McCall, M.D., “Yoga As Medicine: The Yogic Prescription for Health & Healing” Bantam Dell, 2006.

Ways Stress Can Undermine Health

- Impair Immune System Function
- Increase Inflammation
- Decrease Bone Density
- Problems With Memory
- Increase Appetite
- Weight Gain
- Fat Deposits in Abdomen
- Increase Resistance to Insulin
- Increase Blood Sugar
- Increase Cholesterol
- Increase Triglycerides
- Increase Blood Clotting
- Impair Wound Healing
- Poorer Sleep
- Increase Sensation of Pain
- More Fatigue
- Worsening of Mood
- Adoption of Less Healthy Habits

Source: "Yoga As Medicine: The Yogic Prescription for Health & Healing"

So What?

What is key is that the brain can be distracted, calmed by activities that engage and provide enjoyment such as reading a good mystery, bird watching, walking & hiking, playing the tuba, yoga, meditation, spending time with friends...

Dealing with stress is not about moving away from the negative, it is about moving towards the positive. Doing things that make us happy.

D. Mennin, Yale Psychology Dept. of Anxiety & Mood Services

**Increased Balance in Life = Increased Health and Wellbeing
Yoga, focused breathing and related activities offers tools to help bring your mental, emotional, physical and spiritual self into equilibrium.**

Learn to Notice Your Stress Signals

They Might Be:

- **Faster Heartbeat**
 - **Drop in Energy**
 - **Change in Appetite – Over or Under Eat**
 - **Teeth Grinding**
 - **Tension in the Arms, Back, Neck**
 - **Tightness in the Stomach**
 - **Change in Sleep: Interrupted or Too Much**
- ~Attend to these signs early and find ways to cope that work for you~**

Proven Strategies for De-Stressing

- **Socialize.** See friends, relatives, go to the club, Stay connected!
- **Talk, laugh, cry, get angry.** Let it out in a way that leaves you refreshed.
- **Exercise regularly.** Walk the dog, sing, stretch, garden, vacuum...
- **Eat more healthy than not.** Fruit, veggies, low fat.
- **Lose yourself in an enjoyable activity –** play music, dance, cook, write, bird watch, read, chat
- **Try Yoga, Meditation, Thi Chi.** Chose a teacher who fits your style.
- **Breathe slowly** allowing for full inhales and exhales.
- **Pray, meditate**

Sense of Humor

- Best defense
- Laughter is an internal message
- Helps to forgive yourself
- Adds perspective