

Caregiver Stress

Take Care of Yourself



A Guide to Taking Care of Yourself

"The care you give to yourself is the care you give to your loved one," said a caregiver. As caregivers we often try to

do everything possible for the person who is under our care, sometimes at the expense of our own physical and emotional health. Your needs are not small, but, it is often hard to see beyond the care tasks and validate your own personal needs. Studies show that caregiving compromises health.

About 60% of caregivers show signs of clinical depression and caregivers take more prescription medications, including those for anxiety and depression, than others in their age group.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reports that professional and family caregivers suffer from the symptoms of depressive conditions at more than twice the rate of the general population. However, many of those caregivers with the most severe cases of depression
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In-service for Caregivers



What you will learn

After finishing this in-service you will be able to:

Understand the effects of Caregiver stress,

Gain insight into the causes of Caregiver stress,

Apply techniques to prevent and deal with stress,

Find resources for Caregivers,

Care for yourself !

Instructions for the Learner

If you are studying the in-service on your own, please:

Read through all the attached materials. You may find it useful to have a highlighting marker nearby as you read. Highlight any information that is new to you or that you feel is especially important.

If you have questions about anything you read, please ask your CDPC Support Coordinator.

- Take the quiz. Think about each statement and select the best answer.
- You will need to pass the quiz with an 80% score.
- Print your name and the date and then sign your name.
- Keep the in-service information for yourself and turn in the quiz page to Consumer Direct Personal Care.

THANK YOU

don't recognize the typical symptoms of the condition in themselves, believing instead that their fatigue or loss of energy, irritability or agitation, and difficulty sleeping or concentrating are just part of being a caregiver.

Data source: Family Caregivers: Our Heroes on the Frontlines of Long-Term Care, December 16, 2003.



***Providing care to someone –
whether full-time or part-time – takes
a huge toll, both physically and
emotionally.***



Reluctance in asking for and accepting help is a major barrier for caregivers to getting necessary respite and support. It is likely that regardless of the good care that you are providing, your care recipient's disease will worsen in spite of your best efforts. Nevertheless, take pride in the care and comfort you can give. Remember that your commitment and hard work enables another person to live with dignity.

What is Stress?

Stress is simply a fact of nature—forces from the outside world affecting the individual. In general, stress is related to both external and internal factors. *External factors* include the physical environment, including your job, your relationships with others, your home, and all the situations, challenges, difficulties, and expectations you're confronted with on a daily basis.

Internal factors determine your body's ability to respond to, and deal with, the external stress-inducing factors. *Internal factors* influencing your ability to handle stress include your nutritional status, overall health and fitness levels, emotional well-being, and the amount of sleep and rest that you get. The individual responds to stress in ways that affect the individual as well as their environment. Stressors could be physical as well as emotional. Listed below are some common symptoms often reported by those experiencing excess stress.

External stress for a family caregiver can be caused by others feeling neglected because you care for someone else.

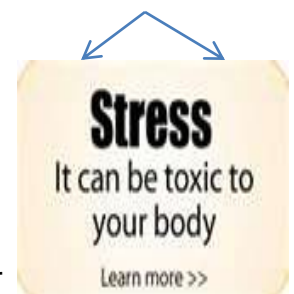


Internal stress can result in you feeling hopeless; "this is never ending." You can lose perspective on your own life.



Physical symptoms include;

sleep disturbances,
muscle tension,
headache,
experiencing abnormal pain,
decrease in appetite,
gastrointestinal disturbances,
fatigue, feeling physically run down, listless, or weak.



Emotional and behavioral symptoms include;

nervousness,
increased anxiety,
changes in eating habits including overeating,
loss of enthusiasm or energy,
inability to think quickly,
insomnia resulting in oversleeping and being tardy,
placing more importance on caregiving than your own well being,
increase in alcohol or drugs that seem like they are helping stress,
feeling guilty,
hyperventilating,
mood changes,
focusing or obsessing on less important commitments,
not asking for help when you know that you need it,
not doing things that you used to look forward to,
making inappropriate statements.



Dealing with stress. Remind yourself constantly that self-care is a necessity, not a luxury. Sooner or later you will start to believe it, and begin to make room for some healthful activities, reach out for help to lessen your load, or both.

- Educate yourself and learn as much as you can about the condition or disease of the person for whom you are giving care. Understanding the progression of the disease will help you to not overestimate what you can reasonably assist with. Know what is out of your hands,
- A healthy step in stress management is exercise. Caregiving is oftentimes physical work. If you are lifting, transferring, bathing and transporting another person your body is working harder than usual. Exercise on a regular basis also helps to turn down the production of stress hormones and neurochemicals. Thus, exercise can help avoid the damage to our health that prolonged stress can cause. In fact, studies have found that exercise is a potent antidepressant, anxiolytic (combats anxiety), and sleeping aid for many people,
- It is important to take breaks and decompress. Take a walk instead of a coffee break. If you live with the person for whom you are caregiving, consider other forms of respite care to allow you a few hours break. Caregivers sometimes think that no one else can provide better care,
- Relaxation techniques and meditation. There are exercises that can be practiced in the workplace such as deep breathing. Find a quiet moment and place to sit with eyes closed and inhale deeply through the nose to the count of 7, hold breath for a count of 4, exhale through the mouth to a count of 9. You will feel stress and tension easing and your breathing will become natural. Spending a few minutes stretching can be beneficial to your health as well as walking up and down stairs to get your heart rate up.



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- Elimination of drug use and no more than moderate alcohol use are important for the successful management of stress,
- learn your stress signals and know your personal limits. This varies for each individual. Think ahead and anticipate possibilities, good and bad, that may become realities at work or home,
- take long weekends or mental-health days at intervals that you have learned are right for you. Remember that you have the right to enjoy yourself!



Remind yourself constantly that self-care is a necessity, not a luxury. Sooner or later you will start to believe it, and begin to make room for some healthful activities, reach out for help to lessen your load, or both.

- recognize that asking for help is a sign of strength and not of weakness. You are not abandoning anyone. It means that you have a grasp on problem-solving approaches,
- write down your caregiver worries. Seeing them in black-and-white helps diffuse some of their emotion and adds perspective to the issues. Share the lists with a provider or someone you trust. The intent is to get comfortable with talking about your need for assistance. Then - ask,
- stay on top of the things that you have to do by writing weekly lists or schedules. Include personal and family matters so that you do not neglect these other components of your life,



Stress is a normal part of life that can either help us learn and grow or can cause us significant problems.



- for those who may need help dealing with stress, stress-management counseling in the form of individual or group therapy is offered by various mental health care providers. Stress counseling and group therapy have proven to reduce stress symptoms and improve overall health and attitude. Some insurances will cover counseling. For more information, please see Caregiver Resources on page 6.
- don't forget humor in your life. *"Humor and laughter strengthen our immune systems and help us recover from illness, as well as bring joy into our lives."*

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See resources for help with or more information on Caregiver stress on Page # 6 of this Training Module.

Tips for Family Caregivers

Family caregivers may live and work 24/7. Who would take care of your loved one if you became incapacitated? Recent studies have indicated that chronic stress in family caregiving accelerates aging. Family caregivers will benefit from this additional information:



- if you are the primary family caregiver and family members are not supportive, believe in yourself and trust your instincts when decision making for your loved one and yourself. Believing in yourself will build confidence,
- watch out for the symptoms of depression. Don't delay in getting help when you need it,
- protect your health. Your life is hard enough and you need to take good care,
- When people offer help, accept the offer and let them know what they can do to help you with caregiving,



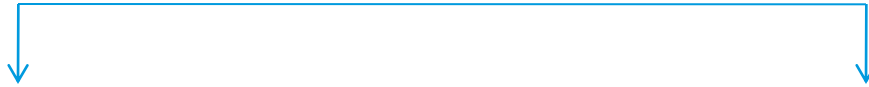
Believe in yourself.

Protect your health.

Reach out for help.

- there is a difference between caring and doing. Open yourself to technologies, equipment and ideas that will assist your loved one in functioning more independently,
- caregivers may do a lot of lifting. Back injuries are the #1 injury in caregiving at a rate that is higher than nursing and construction work. Use proper body mechanics when transferring or lifting,
- seek support from other caregivers. Share information regarding caregiving techniques and problem solving. You can gain strength in knowing that you are not alone,
- be an advocate for yourself and your loved one. Speak up for the rights of other caregivers and seek continued education and support in your community for caregivers,
- grieve for your losses when necessary and allow yourself to move forward. In the end the person knew that someone "cared."

National and local Nevada Caregiver Resources



National Family Caregivers Association

www.thefamilycaregiver.org/

Nevada Care Connection

<http://nevadacareconnection.org/>

Nevada 211

<http://www.nevada211.org/>

email: info@nevada211.org

Phone # 211

Northern Nevada

Crisis Call Center

P O Box 8016

Reno, NV 89507

Phone (775) 784-8085

Fax (775) 784-8083

Email info@crisiscallcenter.org

1-800-273-8255

Southern Nevada

Help of Southern Nevada

1640 E. Flamingo Road #100

Las Vegas, NV 89119

Phone (702) 369-4357

Fax (702) 369-4089

Email info@helpsonv.org

