

Caring for the Caregiver

Learning objectives

The purpose of this seminar:

- Understand the impact of the caregiver role on physical and psychological health
- Identify techniques for caregiver stress management

Survey highlights

*of People Who ‘Self-Identify’ as Family Caregivers,
National Family Caregivers Association*

- 91% believe “preserving your health” is a message that should be told to all family caregivers
- 30% exercise regularly since becoming caregivers, compared with 61% who exercised before becoming caregivers
- 47% seek prompt medical attention for themselves compared to 70% who did so before becoming caregivers
- 92% like the idea of caregivers being considered a special group within the population

Healthy nutrition

- Evaluate healthy nutrition habits and make changes, as needed
- Discuss nutrition needs related to health, medications, activity level and other factors
- Discuss vitamins and other supplements with the physician
- Consult with a dietician, if possible
- Use nutritious meals that can be frozen or quickly heated

Healthy nutrition, 2

- In addition, for older adults
 - People over 70 may require smaller portions of all groups except more of the milk, yogurt and cheese group
 - Arrange for Meals on Wheels or other community assistance for older adults, if possible
 - Drink lots of water
 - Eat fresh fruits and vegetables
 - Consume plenty of fiber
 - Consider vitamins and other supplements

• Activity and exercise

- Stay active!
- Become an active partner with the physician and other health care providers
- Walk whenever you can
- Respect your body and listen to it
- Exercise/sports - find a system or plan that works for you, commit to it and practice on a consistent basis
 - walking, exercise bicycle, weight training, dancing, group exercise, yoga, Tai Chi
- Make exercise a priority (schedule it, if necessary):
- For older adults, stretching and light exercise benefits mind and body, if approved by physician and the person is able to participate

- **Wellness is the goal at all ages -**
a healthy balance

- **Spiritual**

- Faith

- Meaning in life

- **Physical**

- Nutrition

- Exercise

- **Financial**

- Security

- Independence

- **Emotional**

- Friendship

- Connections to others

- Sense of well being

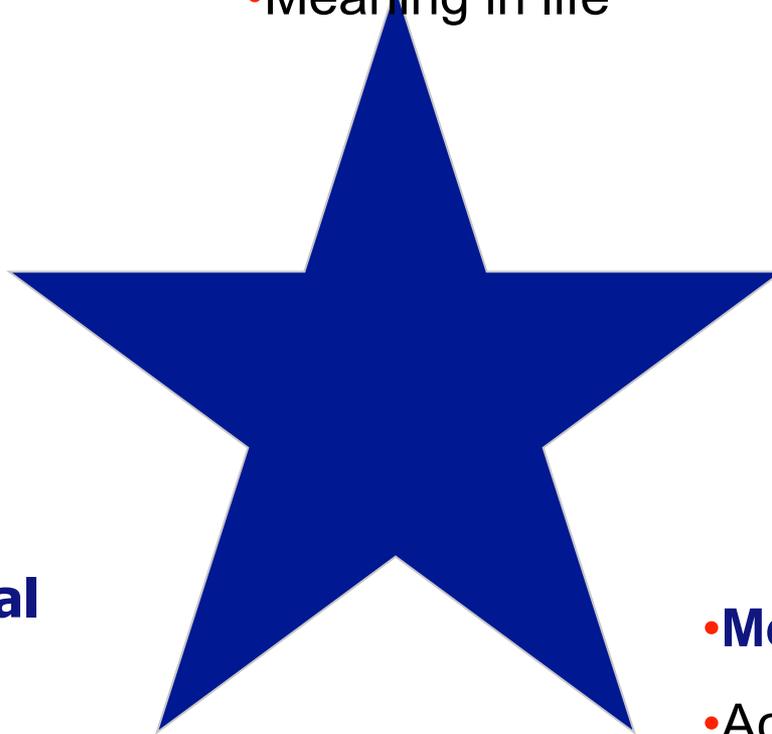
- Belonging to a family and community

- **Mental**

- Activities and hobbies

- Problem-solving

- Continuing education



Your time

- Use a calendar: use one that suits your personality and responsibilities
- Ask yourself the question: “What is the best use of my time right now?”
- Break overwhelming tasks into a series of small steps
- Schedule all activities to ensure they are done - unless they just are not important
- Are you over-committing your time?

Your time, 2

- Look ahead/plan ahead
- Document completions/note successes
 - Evaluate it
 - Give it away
 - Pass it on
 - Plan/organize it
 - Consolidate
 - Handle it as little as possible
 - Eliminate all that extra paper

The telephone

- Set aside uninterrupted time during which you do not answer the telephone
- Suggest specific times for people to call you
- Use voice mail, answering machines, email, Call Notes©
- Be specific in leaving messages about the best time to return your calls

Record keeping

- Set up a caregiver record keeping system that fits your style
 - 3-ring binder with tabs
 - Expanding file
 - Electronic files
- Make lists and use the A-B-C system (with “A” items being the most important and “C” items the least important)
- Apply Pareto’s 80/20 rule (If you prioritize activities, 20% of your efforts will probably resolve 80% of the problems)

Record keeping, 2

- Handle paper and information once
 - Delete it
 - File it
 - Delegate/forward
 - Do something and complete
 - Make lists and do what is on them or don't list it

Files

File folders:

- Days of the month/months of the year
- Pending
- Project
- Customized
- Consider color coding, according to categories

Labeling:

- Dates
- People
- Contact numbers
- Like things grouped together

Emotional life

- Communicate
- Stay connected to people, activities, and the community
- “What are my priorities?”
- “Did I keep all my commitments?”

Mental and spiritual life

- Keep your mind active:
 - Read
 - Attend adult education classes
 - Participate in community activities
- Find or re-discover a spiritual path:
 - Prayer
 - Meditation
 - Organized worship
- Set aside quiet time or “down time” every day
- Enjoy nature; take a walk

Practical stress management tips

- Manage stress before the situation becomes a crisis
- Reframe how you see situations
- Ask for help and be specific about what you need
- Recognize your history and what triggers your stress response “If you always do what you have always done you will always get what you always got”
- What do you have control over? What can you influence?
- Take care of your physical and mental health
- Have some fun
- Respond - don't react

Practical stress management

tips, 2

- Breathe!
- Practice letting go
- Prioritize activities according to their importance and available time. Activity does not necessarily mean productivity
- Recognize the harmful effects of perfectionism and take steps to be more flexible
- Be willing to accept that sometimes “enough is okay”
- Take one day at a time and value it as if it were your last
- Educate yourself about caregiving
- Join a support group
- Remind yourself about the high cost of worry and the low return
- Decide and “Just do it”

Establish and maintain winning relationships

- Communicate; take the initiative
- Surround yourself with winners
- Avoid negative and critical people
- Be real and true to yourself
- Believe that “*what goes around comes around*”
- Listen

Re-evaluate and re-balance your priorities

- “Am I sure about what matters most?”
- “What am I learning?”
- “What am I doing to take care of myself?”
- “What can I delegate or ask help with?”
- “What can I say no to?”

Top 10 ways to manage your time and your stress

10. Get rid of unnecessary stuff ‘chunk the junk’
9. Be realistic
8. Prioritize
7. Decide
6. Rid yourself of as many interruptions as possible
5. Ask for help
4. Make lists *and do what is written on them*
3. Plan “if you don’ t know where you are going you will end up somewhere else”
2. KISS-keep it simple and sane
1. Take one day at a time and value

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Taking care of yourself!

- What would you tell someone else in your shoes?
- Make a commitment to yourself to take your own advice and take care of you!
- If you take better care of yourself. you will take better care of your loved one
- What are you willing to do differently?
- It is up to you and you are worth it - “If it is to be it is up to me”

Resources for caregivers

Call

- 2-1-1 throughout Texas. Provides information and access to health and human service information for all ages
- 1-800-252-9240 to find local Texas Area Agency on Aging
- 1-800-677-1116 - Elder Care Locator to find help throughout the U.S.

Online

- Family Caregivers Online www.familycaregiversonline.net
 - Online education, resources, links, frequently asked questions
 - Benefits Check-up www.benefitscheckup.org for an online way to determine benefits for which someone qualifies.

No cost services for people age 60 + which may be available...differs by county

- Benefits Counseling
- Ombudsman
- Home Delivered Meals
- Congregate Meals
- Light Housekeeping
- Services are funded by the federal and state governments through the Area Agencies on Aging
- Services are not based on income
- Services are available to all U.S. residents

No cost services for caregivers

- Information on resources
- Caregiver education and training
- Caregiver counseling
- Caregiver respite program
- Case management

Call 2-1-1 for access to health and human service information 24 hours a day, seven days a week

Written by

- Zanda Hilger, M.Ed., LPC, on behalf of Area Agency on Aging of Tarrant County, North Central Texas, & Dallas County, revised April 2017
- This program is one module of a comprehensive caregiver education program
- Go to www.familycaregiversonline.net for more information about this and
 - other training programs
 - internet links
 - frequently asked caregiver questions
 - legal forms
 - phone numbers
 - and more