

Reclaiming Our Personal Strength: Tools for Managing the Stress of Caregiving

Patty Watson-Swan, RN, BSN patty.watson-swan@huntingtonhospital.com

Keiro Caregiver Conference Saturday, March 30, 2019 Pasadena Buddhist Temple

An Overview...

- Defining family caregivers
- Steps for Addressing Personal Stress
 - Step 1 Recognizing the warning signs
 - Step 2 Identifying the sources
 - Step 3 What you can and cannot change
 - Step 4 Taking action tools for managing stress.

Huntington Senior Care Network

"Life is not the way it's supposed to be. It's the way it is. The way you cope with it is what makes the difference...

I think if I have one message, one thing before I die that most of the world would know, it would be that the event does not determine how to respond to the event.

That is a purely personal matter.

The way in which we respond will direct and influence the event more than the event itself."

- Virginia Satir

Family Caregivers...



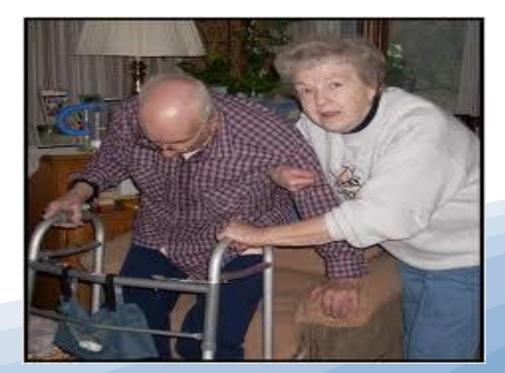




providing care - monthly, weekly, daily...







Demographics...

- Approximately 34.2 million Americans provide unpaid care to an adult 50 or older
- Approximately 15.7 million adult caregivers care for someone who has a dementia diagnosis
- \$470 billion is the estimated economic value of services provided by family caregivers
- 75% of all caregivers are female
- 65% of all care recipients are female, average age 69.4.

National Alliance for Caregiving and AARP 2015

Steps for Reducing Personal Stress

Step 1 - Recognize the warning signs





Early Warning Signs of Stress...

- Do you feel tired or exhausted much of the time?
- Are you becoming increasingly isolated?
- Are you increasing irritable or impatient with others?
- Do you have sleep problems such as difficulty falling asleep at night or awakening early?
- Are you experiencing appetite changes?

Warning Signs are Telling Us...

- Stop and pay attention
- Evaluate what is happening
- Listen to those around us who may see the warning signs we might be missing
- It's just like the flashing red light on our car dashboard – don't ignore it!
- The earlier we see the signs, the better our chances for making positive changes.

⁹ 3/22/2019 Taking Care of You: Powerful Tools for Caregivers

Step 2 – Identifying the Sources of Stress

You may be surprised – not all sources of stress are what you may first think



Sources of Stress may be...

- Disagreements among family members
- A lack of open communication with you and the person you care for
- Other demands on your time, energy or money
- Feeling a loss of freedom to do what you want to do
- Feeling that *no one else* can do the caregiving job as well as you do.

Identifying the Sources of Stress...

- Important to identify early before the sources overwhelm you
- Too often, caregivers push until their own health suffers
- Not caring for yourself benefits no one not you and definitely not the person you care for.

Step 3 – What You Can and Cannot Change

The Serenity Prayer

"God grant me Serenity to accept the things I cannot change, Courage to change the things I can, and Wisdom to know the difference."

Reinhold Niebuhr, 1934

Your Caregiving Situation...

- Identifying what you can change can give you a sense of control
- The only person you can change is yourself!
- You can't change the diagnosis of the person you care for but you can learn more about it
- Reach out and accept support from others
- Try to identify unrealistic expectations
- Let go of what you cannot change.

¹⁴ ^{3/22/2019} Taking Care of You: Powerful Tools for Caregivers

Step 4 – Taking Action to Manage Stress

Practicing self-care learning techniques that lower stress developing plans of action



Our Thoughts, Beliefs and Perceptions...

- Reframing
 - Changing your role from "caregiver" to "care manager" allows you to accept help from others to get the job done
- Self-talk
 - Changing from negative to positive self-talk takes practice!

Self-Care...

- Attending to your own health care
- Eating nutritious food
- Getting enough rest
- Taking time off for yourself
- Exercising regularly
- Participating in nurturing activities.

¹⁷ ^{3/22/2019} Taking Care of You: Powerful Tools for Caregivers

Social Support...

- Talking to a supportive friend or family member
- Reaching out to a trusted professional advisor
- Reconnecting with your spiritual community
- Consider joining a caregiver support group
- Learn about disease-specific organizations.

Stress Reducing Techniques...

- Find ones that are quick and easy to build into your daily schedule
 - Relaxation breathing
 - Gratitude Journals
 - Joy Breaks
 - Mindful meditation
 - Action plans.

Powerful Tools for Caregivers and Dr. Arvid Straube

Deep Relaxation Breathing

1. Close your eyes if possible. If not, lower your gaze to help focus.

- 2. Inhale to a count of seven, slowly and deeply through your nose.
- 3. Exhale to a count of seven through your mouth, slowly and deeply.

4. Continue for 2 minutes - don't force your breathing. If distracted, just refocus on your breathing.

Taking Care of You: Powerful Tools for Caregivers

20 3/22/2019



Gratitude Journals

- Taking time each day to remember 3 things you are grateful for
- Don't spend a lot of time thinking just what first comes to mind -
 - "having enough to eat"
 - "a good night's sleep"
 - "my (spouse, child, friend) for supporting me."

Adapted from Dr. Arvid Straube

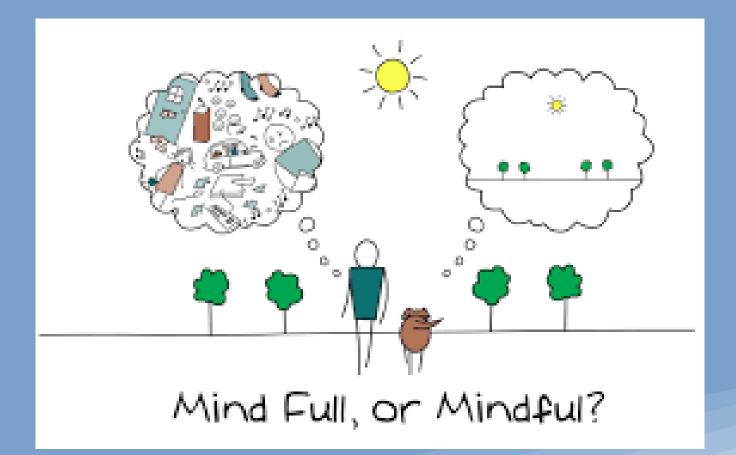


Resiliency and Joy Breaks

- Resiliency is an innate strength that people can use in times of stress to help move forward in difficult situations.
- It's possible to improve and strengthen our resiliency – "emotional intelligence."
- "Joy breaks" Dr. Arvid Straube
 - Take a moment, close your eyes, and think of something that brings you joy.



Mindfulness



Mindful Meditation

- Sit in a comfortable position
- Close your eyes or lower your gaze to better concentrate
- Relax your body by first tightening then relaxing your major muscles
- Be aware of your breathing, naturally breathing in and out
- You can choose a word or a phrase for focus.

Mindful Meditation continued...

- You can use the breathing and words together for example, focus on "I" on the in-breath and "AM" on the out-breath.
- You'll have distracting thoughts when your mind wanders, bring your focus back to your breath and chosen words.
- Pick the time that's right for you start with a a few minutes, then build to 10 or 20 minutes.

28 3/22/201



Action Plans

1. What are you going to do?

2. How much you are going to do?

3. When you are going to do it (i.e. what time of day)?

4. How often you are going to do it?

How confident are you that you will complete your action plan this week on a 0 – 10 scale?

Action Plan Example

This week I will read a favorite book (what) for a half-hour (how much) in the midafternoon when my spouse sleeps (when), three times – Monday, Wednesday, and Friday (how often). Confidence level - 8

A confidence level less than 6 is good feedback for yourself - try revising the action plan for a more achievable goal.

In Summary...

Again, the words of Virginia Satir –

"Life is not the way it's supposed to be.

It's the way it is.

The way you cope with it

is what makes the difference..."







thank you

References

www.aarp.org/ppi

www.alzheimersla.org

www.caregivers.org

www.keiro.org

www.firstuusd.org/choosing joy/Dr. Arvid Straube

Beddoe, L., Davys, A., & Adamson, C. (2013). Educating resilient practitioners. *Social Work Education*, *32*(1), 100–117. doi: 10.1080/02615479.2011.644532

Cleland, Marilyn, Vicki Schmall, and Marilynn Sturdevant.
(2013). <u>The Caregiver Helpbook</u> - <u>Powerful Tools for Caregivers</u>.
Portland, Oregon: 3rd edition.