

# Caregivers' Handbook

Chap. 8: Managing Caregiver  
Stress (pgs 71 – 80)

“You Are Doing a Great Job....”

- Exercise: affirmation and shoulder massage
- *How do you feel?*

## Exercise shows:

- Soothing ourselves is possible
- Easier with others than alone
- Feeling stressed does not have to last long
- We can make ourselves feel better



# Survey: Who are you caregiver for?

- Elderly?
- Terminally ill?
- Autistic?



Physically challenged?  
Intellectually challenged?  
Mentally ill?

## *Share with a partner*

- *Introduce yourselves*
- *Who are you caregiver for?*
- *How are you managing caregiver stress now?*

## *Reflective Pause*

- *How stressed are you in your care giving role? Be honest 😊*
- *Rate your stress on a scale of 1-10*
- *Survey*
- *Share with a partner*

# Managing Stress

## Blockages:

- Denial of stress
- Imagining you're superman/superwoman
- Blaming others
- Feeling guilty



# Managing Stress

## Necessary first steps:

- Awareness of stress
- Honest, humble self-acceptance
- Taking ownership, self-responsibility

# What is Caregiver Stress?

*p. 71*

- Physical & emotional strain that comes from care giving



# What Causes Caregiver Stress?

Basically:

- When your own needs are not being met
- You don't feel "in control" any more

# Caregiver Stress: 7 Common Causes

1. Multitasking
2. Lack of Appreciation
3. Lack of Personal Space & Time
4. Relationship Issues
5. Individual Stress Triggers”: which?
6. Unrealistic Expectations
7. Dealing with Death

## *Reflective Pause*

- *Which of the 7 Causes of Stress is true for you? [More than one possible]*
- *Share with a partner*

# 1. Multitasking

You play multiple roles while care-giving

- Spouse
- Parent
- Son or daughter
- Sibling: brother or sister
- Employee
- Others?

# 1. Multitasking

- Performing all these roles at the same time:
  - Physically impossible!
  - Overwhelming
- Sacrifice needed, some roles suffer, e.g. missing child's concert when mum is ill
- Causes guilt feelings, emotional stress

## *Reflective Pause*

- *Which are the roles you are playing other than as caregiver?*
- *Which role (s) is causing most stress?*
- *Share with a partner*

## 2. Lack of Appreciation

- Most common!
- Start out with doing duty caring for loved ones, expecting no gratitude
- After years of doing thankless job, lack of appreciation of your efforts results in stress: feel taken for granted, your efforts are not good enough = stress!

## *Reflective Pause*

- *Rate your feeling of being appreciated on a scale of 1-10*
- *Whose appreciation do you need but are not getting?*

### 3. Lack of Personal Space & Time

- Care-giving: others' needs come first
- Not enough time for personal errands, friends, relaxing, private evening at home.
- Major cause of stress!

## *Reflective Pause*

- *Name the things you have no time for which bother you the most?*
- *How do you feel about this: guilt, anger, irritation, resentment, sadness?*
- *Share with a partner*

## 4. Relationship Issues

- Every family has relationship problems
- Caring for someone you did not get on with: Extra effort needed to get on
- Result; strain/stress, emotional conflicts: past feelings of anger, resentment, hurt, mixed with guilt

## *Reflective Pause*

- *Identify feelings from past experiences which are interfering with present care-giving role? Anger, resentment, hurt, etc?*
- *Rate these feelings on a scale of 1-10*
- *Share with partner*

## 5. Individual Stress Triggers

Different things about care-giving stress out different people: individual stress triggers:

- Mood swings
- Physical strain
- Loss, grief
- Volume of tasks
- Tantrums

## *Reflective Pause*

- *What aspects of care-giving or about the person who are caring for stresses you out the most?*
- *Share with a partner*

## 6. Unrealistic Expectations

The following gives rise to high stress:

- high/unrealistic expectations of yourself
- expecting to be perfect, able to do everything yourself, handle every emergency, know answer to every question
- believing you are superman/woman

## 6. Unrealistic Expectations

The only result of forgetting you are an ordinary human being with limitations:

- Feeling inadequate, powerless
- High stress!
- Which you are causing yourself!

## *Reflective Pause*

- *Rate your feelings of inadequacy, powerlessness in your caregiver's role on a scale of 1-10.*
- *Are you expecting too much from yourself, or are others expecting too much from you?*
- *Share with a partner*

## 7. Dealing with Death

### Caregivers of terminally ill:

- No improvement no matter what you do
- Gives rise to guilt, frustration (also from relationship problems)
- Knowing loved one is going to die: mixed feelings: anger (against God?), sadness, grief (loss), depression

## 7. Dealing with Death

Caregivers of terminally ill:

- Such feelings go very deep
- Cannot cope alone; talk to someone, seek counselling or medical help
- Do not ignore such feelings!
- Not a sign of weakness to ask for help, but courageous to admit you can't cope

## *Reflective Pause*

- *If you are caregiver for a terminally ill person, share with a partner how you are feeling.*
- *Who do you usually talk to for support?*

# Symptoms of Stress

- Easily irritated, get angry or sad easily
- Mood swings: crying suddenly for no “proper” reason
- Feeling frustrated, angry or guilty
- Constant fatigue, tiredness
- Sleep problems: either too much or too little

# Symptoms of Stress

- Eating too much/too little: weight gain/loss
- More frequent relationship conflicts between spouses, or between parents & kids
- Withdrawal/isolation, lack of interest in activities you used to enjoy
- Frequent headaches, stomach aches, other physical symptoms like aches/pains

## *Reflective Pause*

- *Which symptoms of stress do you have?*
- *Share with partner*

# What is Caregiver Burnout?

- Result of pushing yourself beyond your limits, not getting help, support
- State of physical, emotional & mental exhaustion
- Change from:
  - Positive to negative attitude
  - Caring to not caring

# What is Caregiver Burnout?

- Final outcome of lack of self-care
- Symptoms more serious, intense than caregiver stress
- Hard to recover
- Better to prevent

# Managing Caregiver Stress

- Caregivers good at soothing, comforting those they are giving care too
- But often ignore their own stress, or feel guilty about taking time for self-care
- Stop feeling guilty!
- Self-care ensures better care-giving & for longer time

## *Reflective Pause*

- *Rate your guilt feelings about taking care of yourself on a scale of 1-10*
- *What are you doing which counts as self-care?*
- *Share with partner*

# Take Care of Your Own Health

- “A healthy caregiver is a good caregiver
- Balanced diet, regular meals
- Sufficient sleep & rest
- Regular exercise
- Keep your self-talk positive
- Maintain your sense of humour
- Regular medical & dental check-ups

# Maitain Your Sense of Humour



# Don't Ignore Your Social Life

Spending time with friends:

- helps renew spirits, boost energy
- provides emotional support
- solutions to problems
- Important: make time for friends, esp. on weekends

# Don't Ignore Your Social Life

- Run errands with a friend
- Regular phone calls, catch up for coffee, meal
- Join interests groups to meet people with similar interests, e.g. karaoke, mahjong, yoga

*“The time to relax  
is when you don’t have  
the time for it.”*

*From Chap. 8 title page.*

# Get a Support Team

- Caregivers cannot work alone!
- Be realistic about own limits
- Ask others for help from family & friends, but be specific, give clear instructions
- List your care giving tasks: prioritise: do what is important first; some are unnecessary? [lower your standards?]

# Get a Support Team

- Break down big tasks into smaller, manageable steps: prevents feeling overwhelmed, e.g. divide shopping list
- Delegate some tasks to others
- Let them give you some time out to relax, re-energize

## Get a Support Team

- Join a caregivers' support group
- Use community resources: day care centres, respite care facilities
- Be creative; explore alternative solutions

## Some Stress-Busting Strategies

- Plan your finances & stick to your budget; prevent money worries
- Appreciate yourself: you are doing the best you can; no need to be perfect
- Nourish your soul through faith/religion, inspiring stories;
- Read caregivers' stories in handbook

# In a Nutshell: Summary

- Refer pg. 78

# Cultivate Your Sense of Humour

- Keep yourself sane!
- Watch comedies on t.v.
- Read joke books
- Mix with people who make you laugh
- Laughter yoga

# Making Resolutions

- Decide on two things you will do to manage your caregiver stress more effectively
- “I will.....” not “I will try.....”
- Share with a partner