

# Caregiver's Workshop

## *Handout Information and Recommended Resources*

### **Signs and Symptoms of Caregiver Stress**

*As well as the reward that often comes from providing care for others, as I am sure each of you know, there can also be emotional and physical strain of caregiving. When caregiver stress puts your own health at risk, it affects your ability to provide the best care, which obviously can hurt both you, and the person you're caring for. So it is important to recognize not only your need to manage the stress levels in your life, but to also recognize the **signs and symptoms of that caregiver stress**. Some of those signs and symptoms are:*

- *Feeling tired most of the time and having much less energy than you once had*
- *Overreacting to minor nuisances due to feeling overwhelmed, irritable, and increasingly resentful*
- *Sleeping too much or too little*
- *Gaining or losing a lot of weight*
- *Drinking, smoking or eating more*
- *Losing interest in activities you used to enjoy*
- *And new or worsening health problems*

### **Caregiver Stress and Strategies for Coping**

#### **Key considerations**

- *Knowledge and & understanding of the disease or disability of the care-receiver*
- *Recognize that you don't have to go it alone*
- *Communication*
- *Self-care*
- *Feeding your spirit*

#### **Signs and symptoms**

- *Fatigue,*
- *Feeling overwhelmed*
- *New or worsening health problems*

#### **Coping Strategies**

**Improve self-care and develop effective communication skills**

- **Physically:** Healthy eating, avoiding alcohol and drugs, sleeping, exercise, own health care, meditation/prayer
- **Emotionally:** Accept your feelings and deal with them. Common feelings include: anxiety, worry, anger or resentment, guilt, grief
- **Social Support:** stay social, share feelings, join a caregiver support group: local or online
- **Lifestyle considerations:** do things you enjoy, find time to relax, maintain balance in your life, get organized, stay positive
- **Learn to communicate well** through attentive listening for understanding, as well as expressing your own thoughts and feelings clearly.

### **Know and understand your limits**

- Just say “no”, ask for help & accept help when it is offered
- Call on community resources

### **Summary**

- Caregiving is rewarding, yet stressful
- Take advantage of strategies, coping skills, tools and resources

## **Communication Matters**

- Be mindful of, and pay attention to, how you communicate with others.
- Be aware of your approach for talking with someone else: speak for yourself using "I" statements to express thoughts and feelings, rather than using "you" statements.
- Be aware of filters; that is, anything that can get in the way of effective communication
- Communication is a basic life skill. Effective communication involves the ability to listening to, and understand others, as well as being able to express one's thoughts and feelings.
- Listening requires full concentration, undivided attention and active involvement.
- Choosing to actively listening is listening with the heart. It demonstrates a desire to understand another person; it shows an attitude of respect and acceptance, and a willingness to be open to seeing things from the other person's point of view.
- The skill of listening is both a commitment and a compliment.
- As care-givers, it is important to communicate care, concern and compassion to the care receiver.

## **Recommended Resources**

### Caregiving Information

*“Caregiver Handbook” by Gail Sheehy (Gail took care of her husband for many years, and writes about that experience and what she learned. She also interviewed other caregivers and tells their stories. It is a thorough book on caregiver experience and offers wonderful advice to avoid pitfalls.*

*Google Meredith Viera...she has written on the topic of her ill husband and being a caregiver to him.*

*Find caregiver services in your area: Explore Family Caregiver Alliances – Family Care Navigator*

*Caregiver Conference held through Aging and Disability Resource Center annually (early June) in Tukwila*

*Caregiver Support Group at Good Samaritan Behavioral Health (325 E. Pioneer, Puyallup) (253) 697-8400. Held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of every month; facilitator - Madred Slaker*

*Offering **HOPE** for the Journey (Counseling for Women) Beth Zier, MA, LMHCA (104 W. Meeker, Puyallup) (253) 732-8671.*

[www.aarp.org/relationships/caregiving/info-06-2010/crc-10-caregiver-stress-management-tips.html](http://www.aarp.org/relationships/caregiving/info-06-2010/crc-10-caregiver-stress-management-tips.html)

[www.helpguide.org/elder/caring\\_for\\_caregivers.html](http://www.helpguide.org/elder/caring_for_caregivers.html)

[www.caregiving.com](http://www.caregiving.com)

### Communication Skill Building Information

<http://www.practical-management-skills.com/basic-communication-skills.html>

[http://www.helpguide.org/mental/effective\\_communication\\_skills.html](http://www.helpguide.org/mental/effective_communication_skills.html)

[http://www.helpguide.org/mental/eq6\\_nonverbal\\_communication.html](http://www.helpguide.org/mental/eq6_nonverbal_communication.html)

<http://seenmagazine.us/articles/article-detail/ar/209/teaching-basic-communication-skills.aspx>

*Gottman, J., Notarius, C., Gonso, J., Markman, H. A Couple's Guide to Communication.*

*Champaign, Il: Research Press Co. (1976).*