

Caregiving

When caring for a loved one, there can be many challenges. Often in caregiving we can feel alone and overwhelmed. This workshop will walk you through those challenges and share resources that are available for caregivers and families of seniors.



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Introduction

Caregiving can be rewarding, but it can also cause stress and feelings of frustration. Caring for another who has recently become disabled, or has Alzheimer's disease, can change one's life. You may find yourself experiencing feelings of being overwhelmed, angry and resentful. During those times, there are several services available, to support you and your family. These services can also increase the independence of your loved one, creating community connections to make your support network even stronger.

This workshop will help you understand symptoms of stress related to caregiving, the types of support and resources available for caregivers, and how we can continue to care for ourselves as well.

Opening Discussion

Do you find it difficult to care for others and yourself?
Do you talk openly with your family, about how you wish to be cared for?

The Challenges of Caregiving

DISCUSSION:

Are there cultural expectations related to caregiving?

How has your culture informed care taking roles within your family?

The demands of caregiving can have long-term affects on your physical and mental health as well as relationships. Learning to recognize the signs of caregiver stress can assist you in getting help from support services. Some signs of stress, that are quite common for caregivers include:

- Mood swings
- Exhaustion
- Drinking heavily
- Depression
- Overeating or not eating enough
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Neglecting responsibilities
- New or worsening health problems
- Feelings of resentment
- Foggy thoughts, trouble concentrating

A caregiver with extreme stress can be detrimental to the person receiving care, as well as to the caregiver themselves.

Take the Quiz: Caregiver Stress

Place the number in the white box that applies to you.

Every day = 1 Often = 2 Sometimes = 3 Seldom Never = 4

How common is it for you to get seven or more hours of rest?

How often do you experience feelings of joy and happiness?

How often do you feel you have the energy for daily tasks?

How often do you engage in social activities, or do things you enjoy?

How often are you patient with the person you are caring for?

Results

Total =

Caregiver stress can be described in terms of a scale. If your answers resulted in high scores, 15-20 points, you may be experiencing high levels of caregiver stress. It is important that you and your family come up with a strategy to relieve caregiver stress. There are services to help and know that you are not alone.

Services Available for Caregivers

DISCUSSION:

What agencies have you found that are helpful, in your community?

Across Ontario there are several agencies that provide services, to assist caregivers and their loved ones, to live at home and keep connected with their communities. The following are just a few to help you connect with local services in your area. Remember you can always call [211](#) to speak with staff that can refer you to specific community, health and social services to meet your needs.

[Local Integrated Health Network](#).....310 2222

LHINs arrange all government-funded home care, community services for seniors living at home and with applications for admission, to long-term care homes. LHINs are responsible for deciding who receives care, the level of care needed and for how long.

[Hospice Palliative Care Ontario](#)1 800 349 3111

Hospice Palliative Care is aimed at improving the quality of life of persons who are living with, or dying from advanced illness, or are bereaved. HPC meets not only physical needs, but also psychological, social, cultural, emotional and spiritual needs of each person and their family.

[Ontario Community Support Association](#).....1 800 267 6272

Ontario Community Support services, help people dealing with a disability, illness or limitations due to aging, function independently. To find services near you, visit the [Carefinder](#) to learn more about: Adult Day Programs, Attendant Services, Meals on Wheels, Supportive Housing, and Transportation.

[Retirement Homes Regulatory Authority \(RHRA\)](#)1 855 275 7472

Retirement homes are privately owned. They rent accommodations to seniors who can live with little or no outside help. To help you find a list of retirement homes in the area you wish to live call the RHRA.

[Alzheimer Society Ontario](#).....1 800 879 4226

The Alzheimer Society can assist by providing information, resources, education, support and counseling related to caregiving for those with Alzheimers.

24 Hour Support Lines

[Drug and Alcohol Helpline](#)..... 1 800 565 8603

[Mental Health Helpline](#)..... 1 866 531 2600

[Seniors Safety Line](#)..... 1 866 299 1011

Caring for Ourselves

DISCUSSION:

Would you access services for you and your loved one?

In order to keep loved ones safe and well taken care of, we must first address our own well-being. Here are a couple of things to keep in mind, when caring for loved ones.

- **Make time for yourself~** Don't forget about self-care. Making time to do things that bring you happiness are important.
- **Access the services available~** Sometimes we think we can accomplish everything on our own and that asking for help shows weakness. Accessing services available to you is your right and will increase your quality of life.
- **Set realistic goals~** Setting small goals that are measurable and realistic will help keep you focused.
- **Involve your loved one in their care~** Remember that they may find losing their independence and privacy, difficult. Respect their wishes about remaining independent in ways that are reasonable. For example, choosing what to wear or dressing themselves.
- **Have a support system~** It is important to share your feeling with others especially those with shared experiences. Joining a support group might bring great comfort.

Smart Goals

Set Goals that are **smart!**

S Specific
M Measurable
A Attainable
R Reasonable, Rewarding
T Time-Based

Set goals related to your care that follows the 5 principals of a smart goal, for example:

I will call my friend at 1:00 pm for support once a day for a week.



Take a moment to create a smart goal below:

Caregiving Stress Tip Sheet

Negative effects of caregiver stress

Caregiving can cause negative symptoms and long term effects. Below are some signs of stress and are quite common for caregivers:

- Mood swings
- Exhaustion
- Drinking heavily
- Depression
- Overeating or not eating enough
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Neglecting responsibilities
- New or worsening health problems
- Feeling resentful
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Results

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Caregiver stress can be described as a scale. If your answers resulted in high scores, 15-20 points, you may be experiencing high levels of caregiver stress. It is important that you and your family come up with a strategy to relieve stress related to caregiving. Don't worry. You are not alone, there are services to help.

Taking Care of Ourselves

- Have a support system
- Involve your loved one in their care
- Set realistic goals
- Access the services available
- Make time for yourself

Smart Goals

Set Goals That Are smart!

S	Specific	Set goals related to your care that follows the 5 principals of a smart goal, for example: <i>I will call my friend at 1:00pm for support once a day for a week.</i>
M	Measurable	
A	Attainable	
R	Reasonable, rewarding	
T	Time-Based	

Who Do I Call if I Need Help?

Across Ontario there are agencies that provide services to help caregivers and their loved ones live at home and keep connected with their communities. The following are just a few to help you connect with local services in your area. Remember you can always call [211](tel:211) to speak with a professional that can refer you to specific community health and social service based on your needs.

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