Caregiving: Preventing Family Caregiver Burnout

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Focus of Presentation

- The journey of caregiving for someone with physical disability and/or dementia
- Factors that make the caregiving journey particularly difficult
- Strategies that can make for a healthier journey
- Professional messages that make a difference!
The Journey and Challenges of Family Caregiving
The Caregiving Journey
Comparing the Journey

Adult

Child

Spouse
The Caregiving Journey Involves Change

- Change in *activities*
- Change in *relationship* with care receiver
- Change in *role* and *identity* of caregiver
For the journey, caregivers must take care of themselves ...

And the reasons why...
Impact of Caregiving Journey: Emotional

- Increase in depression and anxiety. Associated with:
  - Role overload
  - Poor health
  - Lower life satisfaction before caregiving
  - Being an adult child caregiver
  - Caring for someone with dementia

- Greater use of psychotropic drugs
Impact of Caregiving Journey: Physical Health

- Poorer self-rated health status
- Aggravation of existing physical health problems
- Decrease in immune function
- Less likely to engage in preventive health behaviors
- High level of psychological stress associated with negative health outcomes
Impact of Caregiving: Social

- Decreased time for other family members
- Decreased involvement in personal activities
- Increased isolation
Factors Related to Higher Stress in the Journey

- Behavior and emotional problems in care receiver
- Caregiver’s appraisal of situation as disruptive
- Competing role responsibilities
- Poor relationship prior to caregiving
- Caregiving is not voluntary
- Disagreements among family members
- Living with care receiver
Dementia Caregiving Journey is One of the Most Stressful
What makes for a Positive Difference in the Caregiving Journey . . .

- Having a sense of mastery and control
  - Good information
  - Skill building
  - Sense of confidence
Dementia: A Dying Brain
What makes for a Positive Difference in the Caregiving Journey . . .

- Has a sense of mastery and control
  - Good information
  - Skill building
  - Sense of confidence

- Has social - emotional support
  - Perceived vs. actual support
  - Value of support group
What makes a Positive Difference in the Journey . . .

- Uses a direct style of coping
  - Uses help-seeking strategies
  - Uses problem solving
  - Is able to reframe problems
- Finds meaning/rewards in caregiving
What makes a Positive Difference in the Journey . . .

(continued)

- Uses a direct style of coping
  - Uses help-seeking strategies
  - Uses problem solving
  - Is able to reframe problems

- Finds meaning/rewards in caregiving

- Takes breaks in caregiving
  - Prevent—*not treat*—exhaustion
  - Discretionary—*not obligatory*—activities
Goal in Directing to Services . . .

- Target services effectively that address caregivers’ needs
- Analogy to medicine
  - The right diagnosis (identify the needs)
  - The right medicine (correct service)
  - The right dosage (sufficient quantity)
  - At the right time
    (when caregivers can & will use service)
Professional
MESSAGES that make
a difference!
Taking care of yourself is the BEST GIFT you can give to the person who needs your care.
“Trying to do it all” or “Doing it alone” does NOT make for a better caregiver . . .

. . .And it makes the journey more difficult!
One’s attitude makes it easier or more difficult to deal with the challenges of caregiving.
For a Healthy Caregiving Journey...

- Avoid attitudes that block “balancing”
  - Expecting perfection of self or others
  - “No one can provide care as well as I can”
  - “I could never…” “I would never…” “I should”
Attitude is . . .
The way you mentally look at things

Half empty? or half full?
For a Healthy Caregiving Journey...

- Avoid attitudes that block “balancing”
  - Expecting perfection of self or others
  - “No one can provide care as well as I can”
  - “I could never…” “I would never…” “I should”

- Make decisions based on “what is best”
  ...for everyone
  - NOT on promises or guilt
  - NOT on pressures from others
Your emotions are messages – Are you listening to the message?
Let go of Guilt!

- Examine rules and expectations
- Forgive yourself
- Examine the reality of promises
- Recognize wishes are not deeds
- Focus on what you’ve done well
- Consult a professional
If caregivers are experiencing feelings of guilt ASK:

- Did you actually do something wrong or hurtful?

  OR

- Do you wish you had done something differently?
For a Healthy Caregiving Journey...

- Avoid attitudes that block “balancing”
  - Expecting perfection of self or others
  - “No one can provide care as well as I can”
  - “I could never…” “I would never…” “I should”

- Make decisions based on “what is best”
  - *NOT* on promises or guilt
  - *NOT* on pressures from others

- Pack light—Simplify and prioritize
For a Healthy Caregiving Journey . . .

- Accept what you cannot change
- Let go
- Do not “borrow trouble” from the future
- Make plans for “the worst that could happen”; plan for the best
...Grant me the Serenity to Accept the things I cannot change, Courage to change the things I can, and the Wisdom to know the difference
Change(s) you can make?

- Change the situation
- Change my perception
- Change my response
For a Healthy Journey . . .

- Build support for caregiving
  - Find out what family can do
  - Talk to supervisor and co-workers
  - Plan for emergency and back-up care

- Identify and utilize resources
  - Work place resources
  - Community programs and services
  - Eldercare Locator - 1-800/677-1116
    - www.aoa.gov/elderpage/locator
  - Geriatric care manager—www.caremanager.org
Asking for help is a sign of strength.
Is there a hidden "You" message in your "I" message?
Additional Professional Messages

- Caregiving to adults is different than to children
- You have a right to set limits, to say “no”
- Focus on what you’ve done well
When caregivers don’t take care of themselves, they start “traveling down the road” to compassion fatigue . . .
Caregivers who suffer from compassion fatigue, experience a frozen heart!

- They no longer maintain compassion
- Hearts become closed to the person they care for and to others
Take care of your “heart and spirit”

It’s the “best gift” you can give to your family member who needs your care