

MANAGING CAREGIVER STRESS

INFORMATION FOR OLDER ADULTS, FAMILIES,
AND CAREGIVERS



READ THIS PAMPHLET TO LEARN:

- What Caregiver Stress is.
- The Signs of Caregiver Stress.
- About Resources and Services Available to Help Manage Caregiver Stress.

I AM A CAREGIVER IS IT NORMAL TO FEEL STRESSED?

Yes, this is normal. This stress is called caregiver stress. Sometimes, caregivers can feel even more stress than those they are caring for. You may be so busy caring for someone else that you forget to care for yourself. This can be tiring and stressful.



Feeling too much stress can affect the person you are caring for. They may start to see and feel your stress as well. To help the person you care for, you need to take care of yourself.

HOW CAN I TELL IF I HAVE CAREGIVER STRESS?

Sometimes, it's hard to tell how stressed you feel. Ask yourself if you are feeling any of these common signs of caregiver stress:

- I can't get enough rest.
- I don't have time for myself.
- I don't have enough time to be with other family members.
- I feel guilty about my situation.
- I don't leave the home, hospital or nursing home to do other things anymore.
- I have arguments with the person I care for and with other family members.
- I worry about having enough money.
- I don't know the best way to care for my loved one.
- I feel my health is not good.

If most of these signs describe how you usually or always feel, you may have caregiver stress.

WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT KINDS OF CAREGIVER STRESS?

You might have one or more of these kinds of caregiver stress:



PHYSICAL

Taking care of a loved one can be tiring. You may not have time to eat well and exercise. This can affect your own health.



FINANCIAL

It can be expensive to provide care to your loved one. Trying to manage all of the costs can cause stress. Balancing a job with providing care to a loved one may also contribute to feelings of stress.



ENVIRONMENTAL

You may have gone through many changes to help care for your loved one. How you spend your day or where you live may have changed. These kinds of changes can cause stress.



SOCIAL

You may be spending so much time with the person you are caring for that you don't have time for other family or friends. Not having other family and friends around for support can be stressful.



EMOTIONAL

Different kinds of caregiver stress can cause you to feel:

- Angry
- Depressed
- Longely
- Afraid
- Guilty
- Embarrassed
- Frustrated
- Helpless

WHAT CAN I DO TO AVOID CAREGIVER STRESS?

Here is a list of things you can do that will help reduce your stress:

- Make sure you eat at least 3 healthy meals a day.
- Try to exercise for at least 2 or more hours each week.
- Try to get at least 7 or 8 hours of sleep each night.
- Join a support group. A support group is a group of people in a similar situation who meet regularly to share their experiences.
- Talk to your friends, family, and care providers regularly and share your feelings with them.
- Make sure you keep your medical and dental appointments.
- Ask for help when you need it.
- Make time to relax and care for yourself.



BREATHING EXERCISE FOR CAREGIVER STRESS

Breathing deeply can relax your body. Try this breathing exercise:

1. Sit down in a comfortable position and close your eyes.
2. Put your hands on your stomach.
3. Take a deep breath in through your nose. Feel your stomach push out from your body.
4. Hold your breath for 3 seconds.
5. Breathe out through your mouth slowly and feel your stomach fall back into your body.
6. Do this a few times. This will help your body relax.



WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION?

FAMILY CAREGIVER CONNECTIONS

*PARTNER OF CIRCLE OF CARE

Provides group education and support, individual counselling, information and referral services, and services for family caregivers who are seniors or are caring for older adults.



416-635-2860



<https://www.circleofcare.com/respite/>

CYRIL & DOROTHY, JOEL & JILL REITMAN CENTRE FOR ALZHEIMER'S SUPPORT AND TRAINING AT MOUNT SINAI HOSPITAL

The Reitman Centre offers a 10 session group program for family caregivers which focuses on practical skills-based tools and emotional supports needed to provide care for family members with dementia.

Programs are run out of the Reitman Centre offices located at Mount Sinai Hospital and are free of charge.

Caregivers are welcome to self-refer or to be referred by a health care professional.



416-586-4800 ext. 5882



jenny.carlson@sinaihealthsystem.ca

ALZHEIMER SOCIETY OF TORONTO

If you are caring for a person with dementia, the Alzheimer Society of Toronto can provide information, resources and support for caregivers.



416-322-6560



www.alzheimertoronto.org

LOCAL HEALTH INTEGRATION NETWORK (LHIN)

The LHIN is Ontario's central access point for government funded home care services.



310-2222 (No Area Code)
1-866-243-0061

TORONTO SENIOR HELPLINE

Toronto Senior Helpline offers information on services, agencies, and online resources for caregivers. Visit this website if you are looking for additional information on managing caregiver stress.



416-217-2077



www.torontoseniorshelpline.ca

RELEVANT RESOURCES IN OUR SERIES

- Managing Common Mental Health Conditions in Older Adults
- Recognizing and Managing Anxiety
- Recognizing and Managing Depression

ADDITIONAL HEALTH RESOURCES IN OUR SERIES:

- Advance Care Planning: How to Start the Conversation
- Alcohol and Your Health
- Calcium, Vitamin D and Bone Health
- General Tips for Memory Problems
- Improving Nutrition as You Age
- Improving Urinary Incontinence
- Living Longer, Living Well: Your Guide to Healthy Ageing
- Managing Chronic Pain
- Managing Constipation
- Managing Mild Cognitive Impairment, Alzheimer's Disease And Other Dementias
- Managing Multiple Chronic Health Conditions
- Managing Sedative-Hypnotic Use Among Older Adults
- Managing Sleep in Older Adults
- Managing Substance Use and Addictive Disorders As You Age
- Preventing Falls at Home
- Recognizing and Managing Delirium
- Recognizing and Managing Hearing Loss
- Safe Medication Use for Older Adults
- Substitute Decision Makers and Powers of Attorney
- Understanding Your Palliative Care Options

ADDITIONAL COMMUNITY RESOURCES IN OUR SERIES:

- Elder Abuse
- Meals on Wheels
- Community Transportation Options
- How to Register for Wheel-Trans
- Housing Options for Older Adults
- Driving Assessment Services
- Funding for Mobility Aids from the Assistive Devices Program

Visit www.sinaigeriatrics.ca/healtheducation for additional resources for older adults, families and caregivers.

This information is to be used for informational purposes only and is not intended as a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Please consult your health care provider for advice about a specific medical condition. A single copy of these materials may be reprinted for non-commercial personal use only.

We would like to thank the following for their support of our Education Resources to Support Healthy Ageing Initiative:



**The Ben and
Hilda Katz
Foundation**



Mon Sheong Foundation and the Ben and Hilda Katz Foundation have generously provided funding to support printing and translation of our Education Resources to Support Healthy Ageing.

The Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility supported this initiative with funding through its Seniors Community Grant Program.

Adapted from "Managing Caregiver Stress" in 2016 with permission from the University Health Network Patient and Family Education Program.

Author: Healthy Ageing and Geriatrics Program, Sinai Health System

Modified: 04/2021