



# TIPS FOR COPING WITH CAREGIVER DEPRESSION AND STRESS

**PRESENTED BY**

Capital Nursing Education and Barbara E. West, RN, MSN, CWOCN



Celebrating  
Caregiving



Caring for a loved one strains even the most resilient people. During this Stress Awareness Month, learn techniques for coping with depression and stress – and take steps to support your health and well-being.



# OBJECTIVES FOR THIS WEBINAR

- What are two common signs of caregiver stress?
- What are three signs of depression?
- Name three activities known to reduce stress levels.
- Name two organizations that offer resources for caregivers.



# THREE STORIES

- Bobby - hospice patient, and his elderly mother Wilma
- Richard - devoted husband and caregiver to Lillian
- Elsa - wound care patient, caregiver for her husband with Parkinson's

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Cada paso del camino (Every Step of the Way)



5:29 PM  
3/25/2018

# EMOTIONAL SIDE OF CAREGIVING

- Whether you become a caregiver gradually or suddenly, willingly or by default, many emotions surface.
- Caregivers are often reluctant to admit to negative feelings.
- If you don't deal with ALL of your emotions, they will get your attention!







# FEELINGS

Fear

Frustration

Grief

Guilt

Impatience

Jealousy

Lack of Appreciation

Loneliness

Loss

Resentment

Tiredness



# If only we were perfect we would not feel . . .

- Ambivalence
- Anger
- Anxiety
- Boredom
- Crankiness, Irritability
- Depression/Sadness
- Disgust
- Embarrassment





# FRUSTRATION

- Normal and valid emotional response
- When you are frustrated, it is important to distinguish between *what is* and *what is not within your power to change*.



# SEQUENCE FOR SUCCESS



1. Recognizing stress/depression

2. Deciding we are "worth it"

3. Ask for help for ourselves

4. Ask for help for caregiving

5. Repeat!



# HOW TO DECIDE WE'RE "WORTH IT"

Option #1 (Preferred) –  
Because we are equally worthy of love and care

Option #2 (If #1 doesn't work) –  
Because "they" need us



# COMMON SIGNS OF CAREGIVER STRESS

FROM [HELPGUIDE.ORG](https://www.helpguide.org)

- Anxiety, depression, irritability
- Feeling tired and run down
- Difficulty sleeping
- Overreacting to minor nuisances
- New or worsening health problems
- Trouble concentrating
- Feeling increasingly resentful
- Drinking, smoking, or eating more
- Neglecting responsibilities
- Cutting back on leisure activities





# COMMON SIGNS OF CAREGIVER STRESS

FROM [HELPGUIDE.ORG](https://www.helpguide.org)

- Much less energy than previously
- Catch every cold or flu
- Constantly exhausted, even after a break
- Neglect your own needs, either because you're
  - ~ too busy
  - ~ you don't care anymore
- Life revolves around caregiving, with little satisfaction
- You have trouble relaxing, even when help is available
- Impatient and irritable
- Feel helpless and hopeless



# NATIONAL ALLIANCE FOR CAREGIVING AND AARP STUDY

Stress and strain found in:

- Over half of those who provide major care for parents
- 25% of those who provide any care

Prolonged stress can have serious physical and emotional consequences.

Burnout quiz: <https://assets.aarp.org/www.aarp.org/articles/learn/sidebar/4-quiz.htm#>



# CG STRESS/BURNOUT QUIZ FROM AARP

- Feeling resentful
- Feeling trapped
- Being tired, not getting enough sleep
- Feeling weary
- Feeling troubled
- Feeling helpless
- Poor appetite or overeating
- Being physically exhausted

- Feeling disillusioned
- Feeling useless
- Being utterly drained of feeling
- Feeling "burned out"
- Being unhappy
- Feeling anxious
- Feeling rejected

# SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION (1 of 2)

- Feeling sad, tearful, empty, hopeless
- Changes in eating habits—weight loss, or cravings with weight gain
- Changes in sleep—too much/not enough
- Tired all the time, not motivated to do anything
- Loss of interest in people/activities that once brought you pleasure
- Numbness
- Easily agitated/angered
- Nothing you do is good enough



# SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION (2 of 2)

- Increase in alcohol or drug consumption
- Excessive time on the Internet
- Trouble focusing, thinking, or planning—as if your head was filled with fog
- Neglecting your physical well-being and appearance
- Thoughts of running away, or escaping
- Thoughts of death or suicide
- Ongoing physical symptoms that do not respond to treatment: headaches, digestive disorders, chronic neck and back pain, etc.





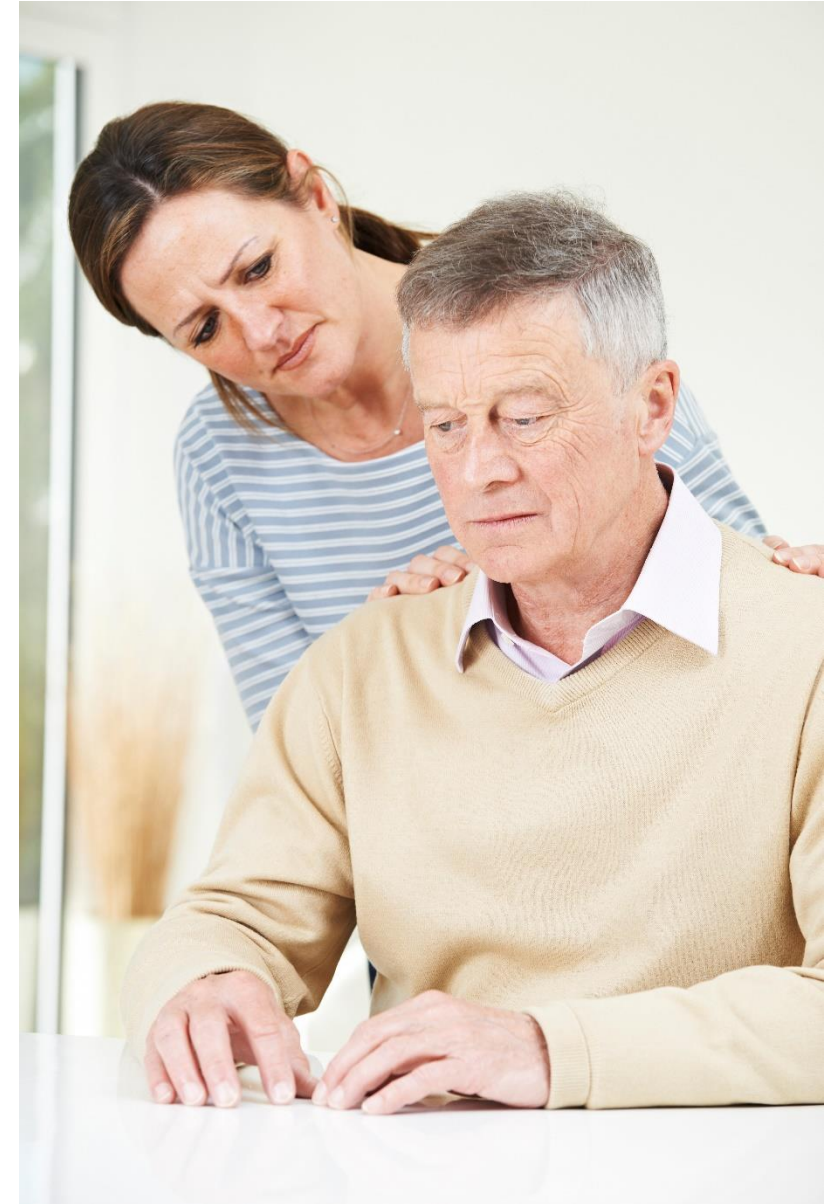
# SPECIAL CAREGIVER CONCERNS (1 of 2)

## **Dementia caregivers**

- Double the rate of depression,
- More problems with employment, health, sleep
- The more severe the dementia, the more likely the caregiver is to experience depression.

## **Military and veteran caregivers are at risk of depression**

- Depression nearly twice the rate of non-military caregivers.
- Dementia, traumatic brain injury, and post-traumatic stress disorder (TBI and PTSD) are particular challenges



## SPECIAL CAREGIVER CONCERNS (2 of 2)

### **Women experience depression at a higher rate.**

- Many women do not seek treatment for depression because they are embarrassed or in denial.
- 41% of women surveyed cited embarrassment or shame as barriers to treatment.

### **Men who are caregivers deal with depression differently.**

- Men are less likely to admit to depression, less likely to be diagnosed.
- More often “self-treat” symptoms (anger, irritability, or feelings of powerlessness) with alcohol or overwork.
- More willing than female caregivers to hire outside help.
- Tend to have fewer friends and outside activities.
- Assumption that depressive symptoms are a sign of weakness make it especially difficult for men to seek help.

# ASK FOR HELP

HELPGUIDE.ORG

## **Speak up.**

- Don't expect friends/family to know what you need or how you're feeling.
- If you have concerns or thoughts about how to improve the situation, express them—even if you're unsure how they'll be received.
- Get a dialogue going.

## **Spread the responsibility.**

- Try to get as many family members involved as possible.
- Divide up caregiving tasks
  - ~ Medical responsibilities
  - ~ Finances
  - ~ Groceries, cooking, errands

## **Set up a regular check-in.**

- Ask a family member, friend, or volunteer from your church or senior center to call you on a set basis.



# ASK FOR HELP

HELPGUIDE.ORG

## Respite care

- Friends and family
- Volunteers or paid help
- Out-of-home respite programs
  - ~ Adult day care centers
  - ~ Nursing homes

## Say “yes” when someone offers assistance.

- Don’t be shy about accepting help.
- Let people feel good about supporting you.
- Have a list ready: small tasks that others could easily do

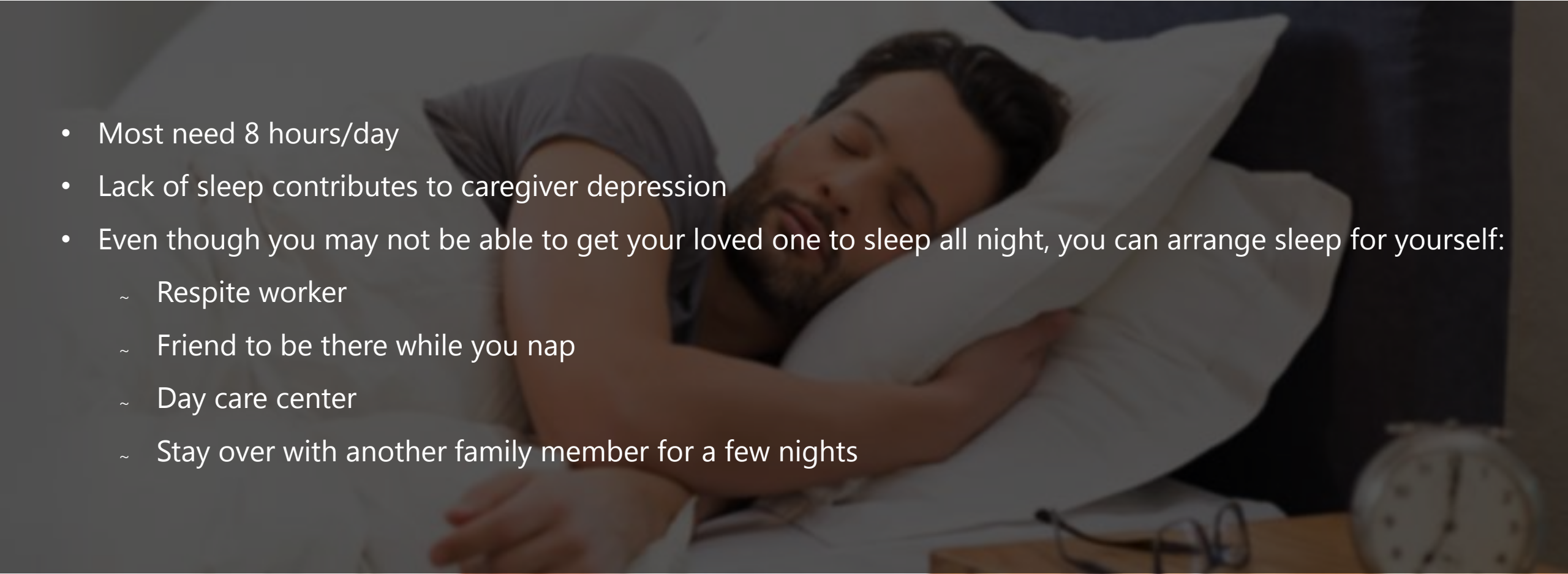
## Be willing to relinquish some control.

- Don’t micromanage or insist on doing things exactly your way.



# SLEEP IS NOT A LUXURY!

- Most need 8 hours/day
- Lack of sleep contributes to caregiver depression
- Even though you may not be able to get your loved one to sleep all night, you can arrange sleep for yourself:
  - ~ Respite worker
  - ~ Friend to be there while you nap
  - ~ Day care center
  - ~ Stay over with another family member for a few nights



# WHAT TO DO IF YOU HAVE DEPRESSION (1 of 3)

- Treat it like any other illness.
- Talk to a qualified professional, like your doctor.
- Watch for depression in care-receiver as well.





# WHAT TO DO IF YOU HAVE DEPRESSION (2 of 3)

- Meet with a mental health professional
  - ~ Psychologist
  - ~ Social worker
  - ~ Licensed therapist
- Schedule a physical with your doctor
- Medication alone is less effective
  - ~ Concurrent “talk” therapy is strongly recommended
    - Listen to your concerns
    - Help you find strategies to
      - ~ Identify and address stressors
      - ~ build new coping patterns
- Treatment should be evaluated to ensure that it continues to contribute towards your improved health and growth.




# WHAT TO DO IF YOU HAVE DEPRESSION (3 of 3)

- Discussing your situation with a therapist
  - ~ New self-awareness
  - ~ Particular emotional concerns
  - ~ Provide guidance for specific challenges in getting and staying healthy.
- When choosing, ask about
  - ~ Experience working with caregivers
  - ~ Understanding of caregiving-related stressors.



# EXERCISE REDUCES EFFECTS OF DEPRESSION

- 
- Walking three times a week for 30 to 45 minutes
  - Get started! (even 15 min. once a week)
  - Add it to your “to do” list
  - Ask for a “walk date” each week as a gift
  - Request that your doctor write a prescription for walking or joining an exercise class.



# COMPLEMENTARY AND ALTERNATIVE THERAPIES

- Meditation
- Prayer
- Deep breathing
- Acupuncture
- Yoga
- Massage
- Listening to music
- Creating art
- Guided imagery
- Journaling
- Light therapy (esp. for seasonal depression)



# STRATEGIES TO HELP YOURSELF FIGHT DEPRESSION

- Set realistic goals.
- Break large tasks into small ones, set priorities, do what you can.
- Try to be with other people, confide in someone you trust.
- Participate in activities that may make you feel better, such as
  - ~ exercise,
  - ~ going to a movie or ballgame
  - ~ attending a religious, social, or community event.
- Expect mood to improve gradually -- people rarely "snap out of" a depression.
- Practice new coping patterns to replace negative thinking.
- Say "yes" to offers of help and engagement by family and friends *who you trust*.

# FINDING BALANCE

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It's easier to accept a difficult situation when there are other areas of your life that are rewarding.

Don't let caregiving take over your whole existence.

Invest in things that give you meaning and purpose—whether it's your family, church, a favorite hobby, or your career.

# THE CRITICAL STEP: ASKING FOR HELP

YOU CANNOT TAKE ON ALL THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF CAREGIVING BY YOURSELF.

**WHEN TO SAY "YES"**  
**WHEN TO SAY "NO"**



# WHAT TASKS CAN YOU OFF-LOAD?

- Weekly visit to hairdressers for shampoo
- Nail salon
- Podiatrist for toenail care
- Housecleaning
- Yard work
- Grocery home delivery
- Medication delivery (in pre-filled medisets!)



# AARP TIPS (1 of 4)

## **Take care of your health.**

- Eat nutritious meals;
  - Avoid binging on sweets or alcohol.
- Get enough sleep
- Exercise regularly
- Treat depression (like any other illness)

## **Maintain social contacts.**

- Isolation increases stress
- Laughing/having fun promotes mental and physical health

## **Call on friends and relatives for help.**



# AARP TIPS (2 of 4)

## GET ADDITIONAL HELP FROM COMMUNITY SERVICES AND ORGANIZATIONS.

### ORGANIZE.

- ~ Set priorities and realistic goals.
- ~ Make a list of what needs to be done.
- ~ Arrange your day to take full advantage of outside help.
- ~ Pace yourself.
- ~ Set limits and learn to say "no."



## AARP TIPS (3 of 4)

### DEAL CONSTRUCTIVELY WITH NEGATIVE FEELINGS:

- When feeling resentful, think about what *you* can do differently.
- Recognize the “anger-guilt-anger cycle,”
  - ~ Stop it immediately by *forgiving yourself* for being angry
  - ~ Distance yourself from the situation
  - ~ Figure out what caused the anger
  - ~ Decide how you can respond more constructively next time





## AARP TIPS (4 of 4)

- Hold a family meeting to resolve conflicts with siblings and other relatives
- Feel good about your accomplishments as a caregiver instead of emphasizing your shortcomings
- Seek support





# SUPPORT GROUPS

Oftentimes, we think we are struggling alone, but support groups help us see that there are others dealing with similar situations, and who in turn can help us get better.



# FIND A SUPPORT GROUP

- Internet
- Yellow pages
- Ask your doctor or hospital
- Call or visit websites for organizations dedicated to your loved one's health problem
- Social media, email lists, message boards



# 12-STEP GROUPS

- CoDependents Anonymous (CoDA)
- AlAnon
- If you have substance addiction issues:
  - AA – Alcoholics Anonymous
  - NA – Narcotics Anonymous
  - OA – Overeaters Anonymous
  - Etc., etc., etc.!

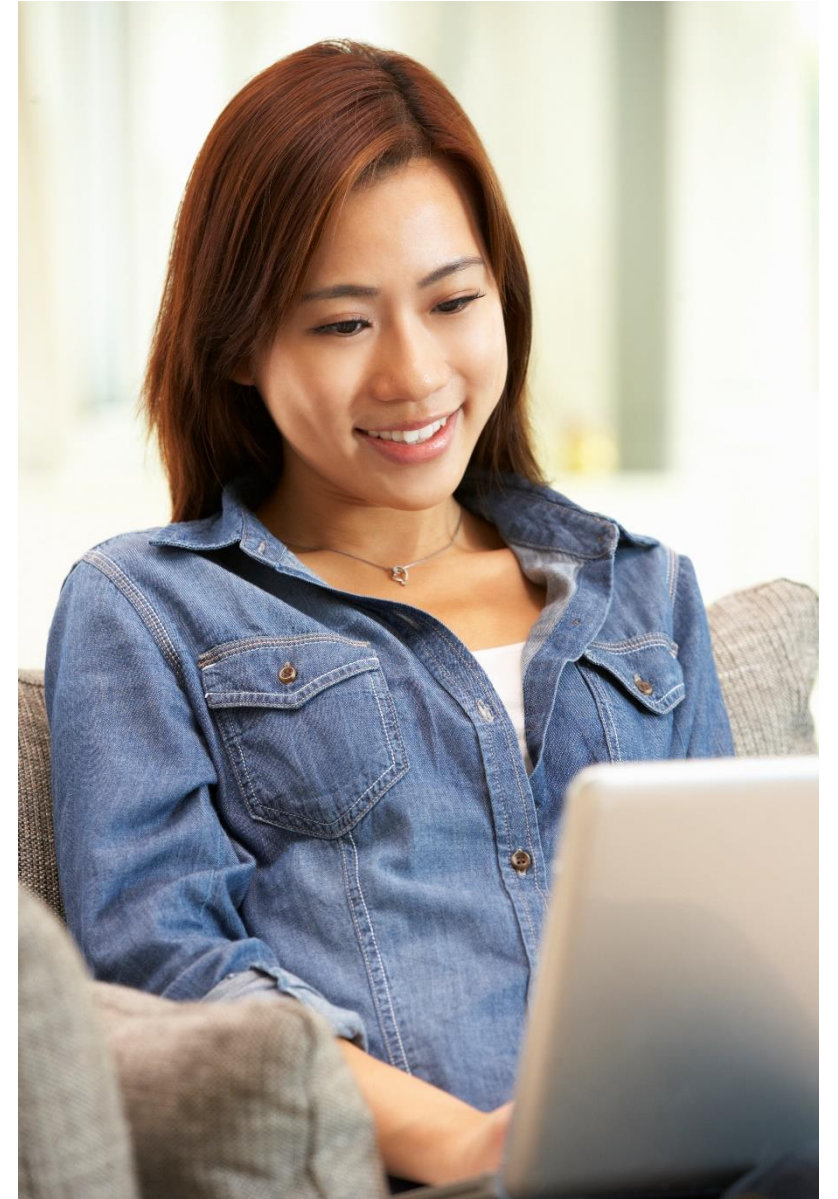




# ONLINE SUPPORT GROUPS

HELPGUIDE.ORG

- People with similar problems who may live anywhere in the world
  - Especially good for unusual circumstances or rare diseases
- Get support without leaving your house
  - Limited mobility
  - Transportation problems
  - Difficulty arranging respite care
- Access groups when convenient for you or when most in need





# SUPPORT GROUPS

- Do not be discouraged if the first support group you find doesn't quite feel right.
- You should feel comfortable in the support group space that you choose, so trying different ones may help you determine the best fit.



# HOSPICE

- Support for patient *and* family/caregivers
- Home Health Aids for bathing
- Social Worker
- Chaplain
- Volunteers
- Respite care
- Nurse
- Support groups, especially bereavement



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# RESOURCES

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**Family Caregiver Alliance (FCA)** seeks to improve the quality of life for caregivers through education, services, research, and advocacy. Through its National Center on Caregiving, FCA offers information on current social, public policy, and caregiving issues and provides assistance in the development of public and private programs for caregivers.



# **FAMILY CAREGIVER ALLIANCE:** **NATIONAL CENTER ON CAREGIVING**

785 Market Street, Suite 750

San Francisco, CA 94103

(415) 434-3388 (800) 445-8106

Website: [www.caregiver.org](http://www.caregiver.org)

E-mail: [info@caregiver.org](mailto:info@caregiver.org)

Family Care Navigator:

[www.caregiver.org/family-care-navigator](http://www.caregiver.org/family-care-navigator)



# FCA FACT SHEETS

All **FCA Fact Sheets** are available online at  
[www.caregiver.org/fact-sheets](http://www.caregiver.org/fact-sheets)

[Taking Care of YOU: Self-Care for Family Caregivers](#)

[Residential Care Options: Choosing the Right Place](#)

[Caregiver's Guide to Understanding Dementia Behaviors](#)

[Dementia, Caregiving and Controlling Frustration](#)

etc., etc., etc.!



## **FCA CAREJOURNEY**

Secure online service for quality information, support, and resources for family caregivers of adults with chronic physical or cognitive conditions such as Alzheimer's, stroke, Parkinson's

[\*\*www.caregiver.org\*\*](http://www.caregiver.org)

# MORE...

Caregiver Action Network, "CAN!"

<http://caregiveraction.org/caregivers-and-depression>

AgingCare.com

<https://www.agingcare.com/articles/caregiver-depression-support-142556.htm>

DailyCaring.Com

<http://dailycaring.com/whats-your-caregiver-stress-test-score/>



# ELDERCARE LOCATOR

(800) 677-1116

This service of the Administration on Aging offers information about and referrals to respite care and other home and community services offered by state and Area Agencies on Aging. <https://www.n4a.org/>

# **ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE EDUCATION AND REFERRAL (ADEAR) CENTER**

**( 8 0 0 ) 4 3 8 - 4 3 8 0**

This service of the National Institute on Aging offers information and publications on diagnosis, treatment, patient care, caregiver needs, long-term care, education and research related to Alzheimer's disease.

## RESOURCES FOR CAREGIVERS OF DIVERSE POPULATIONS AND SPECIFIC AGE GROUPS

Find links to resources for caregivers of adults, children, individuals with disabilities and mental disorders, veterans, and more (American Psychological Association)

<http://www.apa.org/pi/about/publications/caregivers/resources/populations.aspx>

videos.aarp.org/detail/video/4846069296001/



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### Caregiving: The Circle of Love - AARP

[Share](#)

In Caregiving: The Circle of Love, three caregivers discuss about the challenges of caregiving and how their ...





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### Stepping Up: Stories of Jazz and Caregiving - AARP

[Share](#)

Stories of Jazz and Caregiving lovingly opens a door into the lives of four musicians and their families as they...



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# FINDING A MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL

**Psychiatrist (MD):** Specializes in the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of mental illnesses, including substance abuse and addiction.

[www.psych.org](http://www.psych.org)

**Psychologist (PhD):** Practices psychotherapy with training in psychological testing. A psychologist cannot prescribe medications.

[www.apa.org](http://www.apa.org)

**Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW.):** Practices psychotherapy, with specialized training in human behavior, family behavior, psychology, and problem solving.

[www.naswdc.org](http://www.naswdc.org)

**Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists (LMFT):** Practices psychotherapy, can diagnose and treat mental health issues. Works with individuals, couples, families and groups.

[www.aamft.org](http://www.aamft.org)

Additional professionals may be licensed to practice psychotherapy in your state or county. Check with the local mental health department or hospital.

## RESOURCES (1 of 2)

**HelpGuide** is dedicated to Morgan Leslie Segal. For six years, she grappled with a condition that started as low self-esteem and worsened into major depression. She stuck with a single therapeutic mode and her prescribed medications even though the combination just made her worse. Finally, in desperation, she committed suicide just after her 29th birthday.

Morgan loved the Internet. If she had access to the wide range of unbiased, motivating resources and self-help tools HelpGuide now provides, we believe her suicide could have been prevented.

<https://www.helpguide.org/articles/stress/caregiver-stress-and-burnout.htm>

**Paying for Senior Care:** <https://www.payingforseniorcare.com>

641-715-3900 Ext. 606151#,

Provides tools, information and creative ideas which help families and caregivers discover the means to care for their elderly loved ones.

## RESOURCES (2 of 2)

<https://www.nrcnaa.org/native-elder-caregiver-curriculum> A three day workshop that you can request to have offered locally

<https://www.lgbtagingcenter.org/resources/> Resources for caregivers in the LGBT (Lesbian Gay Bisexual Trans) Community

Also look for disease-specific resources and support groups!

Contact your local Area Agency on Aging



## RECOMMENDED READINGS (1 of 2)

*Caring for Yourself While Caring for Your Aging Parents: How to Help, How to Survive.* New York: Henry Holt & Co.

*Caring for Your Aging Parents: A Sourcebook of Timesaving Techniques and Tips.* Lakewood, CO: American Source Books

*How to Care for Aging Parents: A One-Stop Resource for All Your Medical, Financial, Housing, and Emotional Issues, 3rd Ed.* New York: Workman Publishing Co., Inc.

*The Comfort of Home : An Illustrated Step-by-Step Guide for Caregivers.* Portland, OR: CareTrust Publications LLC.

*Caregiving at Home*, William Leahy, M.D., 2005, Hartman Publishing Inc. and William Leahy, M.D., 8529 Indian School Road NE, Albuquerque, NM 87112, (505) 291-1274.

## RECOMMENDED READINGS (2 of 2)

*Bathing Without a Battle.* Ann Louise Barrick, Joanne Rader, Beverly Hoefter & Philip Sloane, Springer Publishing, 2002

*36 Hour Day: Family Guide to Caring for People who have Alzheimer's Disease, Related Dementias and Memory Loss.* Johns Hopkins Press Health Book, 2011

*American College of Physicians Home Care Guide for HIV and AIDS: For Family and Friends Giving Care at Home.* Philadelphia: American College of Physicians.

*Caregiving: A Step-by-Step Resource for Caring for the Person with Cancer at Home.* American Cancer Society.

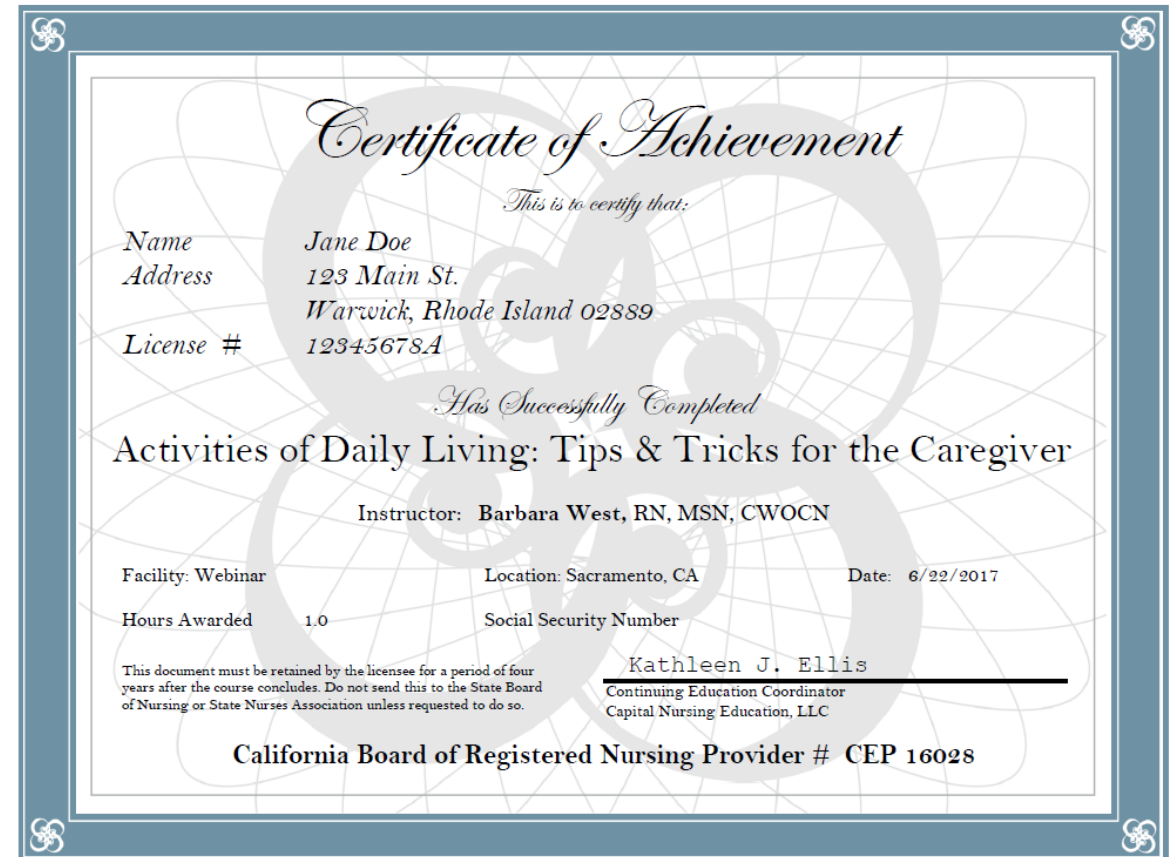
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## CAREGIVERS COMMUNITY

Caregivers Home



### Caregiver Contest Finalist Jennifer: Small Acts

In this Caregiver Contest entry, Jennifer offers advice about not forgetting to perform small acts of kindness to the person being cared for.

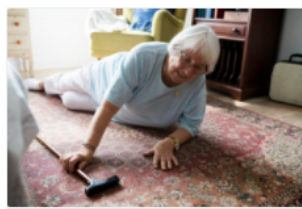
Aimee Sharp



### Caregiver Contest Finalist Nicole: Offer an Explanation

In this Caregiver Contest entry, Nicole gives the advice, "offer an explanation," when interacting with the person you're caring for.

Aimee Sharp



### What to Do After Someone Has Fallen

While it is important to understand and reduce the risks of falling, reacting appropriately is crucial. Here are the steps to take after witnessing a fall.

Stephanie Struyck Elgin



### Caregiver Contest Finalist Stacy: Listen

Stacy M. is from Texas, and was one of forty finalists chosen out of the over 1,000 entries to our...

Aimee Sharp



Learn More

### Caregivers Community Links

Home

Caregivers 101

Links

### Follow Shield HealthCare



You can find more useful information in our online caregivers community at: [shieldhealthcare.com/community/caregivers](https://shieldhealthcare.com/community/caregivers)

View past and upcoming webinars at: [shieldhealthcare.com/webinars](https://shieldhealthcare.com/webinars)



**QUESTIONS?**





# **THIS SEMINAR IS AVAILABLE FOR PRESENTATION IN YOUR AGENCY.**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:**

Shield Healthcare

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

800.765.8775

Capital Nursing Education

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

916.276.8965