

# Family Caregivers Newsletter

Volume I, Issue I

Summer 2013

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## The Family Caregiver

Family caregiving is a rewarding experience to provide for a loved one in need. However, caring for a loved one carries a high potential for burnout. Being a caregiver of a parent with Alzheimer's or any related dementia can be difficult and challenging. It can drain us emotionally, spiritually, and physically. Often times feelings of anger and resentment can set in. Caring for our elderly parents is quite overwhelming. We try to provide the best possible care and make sacrifices for our loved ones. Often, we will neglect our own well-being and get stressed out.

Stress is a normal part of life and is not all bad. However, when stress becomes a constant in our daily lives, it transforms into distress. Stress can cause physical problems (high blood pressure, blurred visions, and stomach irritations) as well as changes in behavior (lack of concentration, loss of appetite, irritability). So, manage the physical and emotional stress in your daily life so that it does not become distress. Learn healthy ways of coping with stress.

Keep in mind that admitting that caregiving is challenging is not a sign of weakness or failure. It is a sign of strength that you are acknowledging that you are feeling tired or stressed and is in need of help. At times your tank will run on empty and you will need to take time out for yourself in order to fill up. Ask for help and show self-compassion.

You must take care of your own needs before you can take care of someone else. Take care and courage. It takes a great deal of courage to take on the role of family caregiver.



## Caregiver Guilt

There may come a time where you may begin to feel guilty for caring for a love one. There are many reasons for feeling guilty. Some people may think they are not doing everything they could for their loved one. Some may not feel comfortable with some areas of the caregiving. Some may not truly enjoy their caregiving tasks, or

wish they didn't have to step up to the challenge at all.

Some may feel like they do not have a life and feel resentful. It is normal to have these thoughts and feelings but they can contribute to caregiver burnout which will only complicate matters and make the process more difficult. There is a special form of guilt that comes

with caring for an aging parent. It can be taxing on an adult to have the reverse roles. Caregivers must find a way to deal with guilt in a healthy manner. Try to discover the source of the guilt. Seek God's direction and comfort. Remember you are not alone. You are doing a good work. You are doing all you can.



**“Music therapy reduces agitation by altering how individuals perceive noise.”**

## Music Therapy

What tune do you dance to? What tune did your love one use to groove to? Music is relaxing and individuals suffering from Alzheimer’s disease can greatly benefit from it.

Research shows that music has a positive impact and act as an calming agent. For example, playing soft music can help foster sleep. Music therapy reduces agitation by altering how individuals perceive noise. Music therapy can help enrich the lives of people with Alzheimer’s disease and can be done in the home by family members

and caregivers.

Music offers a way for family members to reconnect with their loved ones. Music stirs memories, emotions, and encourages group activity. Try to identify music that’s familiar and enjoyable. It could be gospel, country, jazz, classical, or whatever your loved ones enjoys. Try to use live music, tapes or CDs because Radio stations interrupted by too many commercials can cause confusion. Link music with other reminiscent activities; use photographs to help stir mem-

ories.

Encourage dancing, hand clapping, etc. This physical activity is a way to get exercise. Music can help individuals with Alzheimer’s disease interpret his or her environment, which may lessen any fear or agitation. So, consider incorporating Music Therapy as a part of your caregiving regime.

## Managing Stress

When caring for a love one, it is common for caregivers to neglect their own needs which leads to feeling burn out, depressed, anxious, and agitated. It is important for the caregiver to take time out to find ways to relax and relieve tension and stress without feeling guilty.

Plan regularly scheduled activities to get engaged in and asks for assistance with caring for your loved one. Seek the

help of Home Health agencies or Day Adult Centers in order to receive respite. Build up your support system. Often times caregivers may isolates from others and feel that people do not understand them. However, it is important to remain connected and continue to do things you enjoy. Church memberships and other faith groups are a great way to build up your support system and it can help you gain strength and

maintain your focus. Other things to help alleviate stress is to listen to music, exercise, journaling, go see a movie, take a walk in the park, meditation, prayer, reading the Bible or other encouraging and inspirational books.

Seek assistance from your local Alzheimer’s Association, attend a support group, or talk to a therapist to help sort out your feelings, problem solve, and learn and apply healthy coping skills. Take care of you!

## POSITIVE AFFIRMATIONS!

Recite positive affirmations on a daily basis to help keep you motivated and positive. Here are some things you can say to yourself that may help you feel better:

- ◆ I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.
- ◆ I’m doing the best I can.
- ◆ I can’t control some things that happen.
- ◆ I will try to get help from a counselor if caregiving becomes too much for me.
- ◆ I deserve to be loved.
- ◆ I’m not perfect and that’s okay.
- ◆ I am an overcomer.
- ◆ I replace my anger with understanding and compassion.

- ◆ I fill this day with hope and face it with joy.
- ◆ I am drawing from my inner strength and inner light.
- ◆ I am too big a gift to this world to feel self-pity and sadness.
- ◆ I love and approve of myself.

## What to do about swallowing problems

The following suggestions may help with swallowing:

- ◆ Make sure you cut food into small pieces,
- ◆ Grind food or make liquid using a blender.
- ◆ Give more cold drinks than hot drinks. Cold drinks are easier to swallow.
- ◆ Limit the amount of milk the person drinks if it tends to catch in the throat.
- ◆ Don't use a straw; it may cause more swallowing problems. Instead, have the person drink small sips from a cup.
- ◆ Don't give the person thin liquids, such as coffee, tea, water, or broth, because they are hardest to swallow. You can add Thick-It to liquids to make them thicker. You may also use ice cream and sherbet to thicken liquids.
- ◆ Make sure the person is in a comfortable, upright position.
- ◆ To aid digestion, keep the person upright for 30 minutes after eating.
- ◆ Don't try to force the person to eat.
- ◆ Ask a physician about administering a swallowing test to find out if a feeding tube is needed



## Coping with Suspicious, Accusing, and Aggressive Behaviors

Memory loss and confusion may cause a person to become suspicious of you and others around . You may be accused of stealing, cheating, or lying. In addition, aggression may occur in the form of yelling, cursing, hitting, pushing, etc. The behaviors may start suddenly for no reason or may be the result of anger and frustration. Some common triggers are too much noise, too many people, anxiety, feeling out of control, mistaking what she or

he sees or hears, losing or misplacing things, and forgetting where he or she is. Here are some things you can do that are helpful:

- ◆ Stay calm.
- ◆ Don't argue or raise your voice.
- ◆ Respect personal space.
- ◆ Give simple answers..
- ◆ Listen to his or her point of view and affirm.
- ◆ Offer to help find what is lost or missing.
- ◆ Let them know they are safe and that you care.
- ◆ Don't demand an explanation.
- ◆ Try to distract her with something like music or pictures,

## Cash & Counseling Programs

Cash & Counseling, also referred to as Consumer-direction or Self-direction is designed to allow individuals with disabilities and those who are eligible for publicly supported support programs manage and direct their own assistance budget, which are similar to those offered if the individual received services through their state's Medicaid program. It is offered in 15 states.

Here's how it works:

- Participants can hire their own personal caregivers including spouses, siblings, adult children, etc.
- Funds can be used to pay for things like in-home care, transportation, services, assisted devices, necessary home modifications and appliances.
- Individuals who sign up for this program are responsible

worker.

- Participants are also responsible for setting the aids' hours, paying them appropriately and maintaining accurate records.

For more information please visit : [www.cashandcounseling.org](http://www.cashandcounseling.org)

***“Recite positive affirmations on a daily basis to help keep you motivated and positive”***

*Attain a Great Amazing Empowered Life!*

Although this issue offers some strategic advice and coping skills, there are plenty more that can be useful. If you would like to receive future newsletters or words of encouragement visit my website and fill out the corresponding section.

If you would like more information, practical advice, counseling, or consulting about your particular situation, you may schedule an appointment by contacting Arlinda D. Lindsay, MSW, M.Div, LSCW, LCAC. Weekend and evening appointments are available.

## **APPOINTMENTS NOW AVAILABLE!!!**

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**Family Caregivers Circle of Support**

**Every 2nd Saturday of the month**

**1pm-2pm**

**Be Blessed!**

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