

CARING FOR OURSELVES WHILE CARING FOR OTHERS



MIND AT REST
RESEARCH LAB

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When Research with Caregiving overlaps with Personal Experience

- There are only four kinds of people in this world: those who have been caregivers, those who are currently caregivers, those who will be caregivers and those who will need caregivers. Caregiving is universal. *(Rosalynn Carter, Former First Lady of the United States)*
- A caregiver is a person who looks after the needs or concerns of a person.
- Highs
 - Improvement in health (physical and psychological)
 - Improved competence
 - Finding a community and resources
- Lows
 - Declines in health (physical, cognitive)
 - Moving into a personal care home
 - Challenges with managing behaviors

Reflect



- Do you see yourself as a caregiver?
- What are some highs and lows of what you do?

Reasons for Behavioral Challenges and Possible Interventions

- Unmet Needs
 - Sensory Deprivation, Boredom, Loneliness
 - Antecedents-Behaviors-Consequences
 - What led to the behavior and does the consequence reinforce the behavior?
 - Environmental Vulnerability/Reduced Stress Model
 - Greater vulnerability to changes in the environment and lower threshold where environmental stimuli can trigger a behavior
 - Interventions
 - Sounds: Music/White noise
 - Massage
 - Pets
 - One-to-one interaction
 - Rewards for desirable behavior
 - Change in routine
 - Staff training
 - Walks/Physical Activities
 - Light therapy/Sleep interventions
- (Cohen-Mansfield, 2001)

Compassion Fatigue

- A stress response involving the physical, emotional, and spiritual weariness or exhaustion that results from prolonged exposure to difficult situations, diminishing one's ability to nurture, care for, or empathize with another's suffering.
- Who are at risk?
 - Professions which have prolonged exposure to other people's trauma
 - Persons who continue to help by working extra shifts or foregoing days off, neglecting their own self-care.
- Symptoms
 - Exhaustion
 - Disrupted sleep
 - Anxiety
 - Headaches
 - Upset stomach
 - Irritability
 - Numbness
 - A decreased sense of purpose
 - Emotional disconnection
 - Difficulties with personal relationships



Emotional Self-Care

- Stage One – Identification and awareness of emotions and feelings
- Stage Two – Ability to stay with and accept the feelings in order to process
- Stage Three – Processing in order to act on the emotion appropriately. This stage is basically about understanding why you are having the feeling
- Stage Four – Addressing the emotions

(Askew, 2018)

Self-Care

- Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy
 - Zindel Segal, John Teasdale, and Mark Williams (2012)
 - A practical 3-minute breathing structure for noting, grounding, and allowing during challenging situations, whenever automatic pilot thinking takes over during a work shift, or for simply starting and ending a day.
- Psychic Numbing
 - The ability to dial down one's empathetic instincts, freeing up cognitive resources to find solutions to the problems in front of you rather than becoming paralyzed by the scope of need you see.
- Psychotherapy
 - Professional resources to help a person change behavior and overcome problems in desired ways
- Physical Activity

Setting Boundaries

- Personal boundaries are the limits you decide work for you on how people can treat you, how they can behave around you, and what they can expect from you. (Redmond, 2020)

- Our boundaries are shaped by
 - Our heritage or culture
 - The region we live in or come from
 - Whether we're introverted, extroverted, or in between
 - Our life experiences
 - Our family dynamics



Preserving Your Brain Health

Six Pillars of Brain Health



Be Social

Keep in touch with friends & family, don't let yourself get isolated.



Engage Your Brain

Find ways to stimulate your thinking, explore new interests and hobbies.



Manage Stress

Practice relaxation, adopt a stable daily schedule.



Ongoing Exercise

Move throughout the day, target 2½ hours a week of moderate physical activity.



Restorative Sleep

Get 7-8 hours of restful sleep every day.



Eat Right

Choose a nutritious, heart-healthy diet of fish, veggies, and fruits.

- Prevent/Manage Chronic Conditions
- MIND, DASH, or Mediterranean
- Continuous Learning
- Social Engagement
- Memory Screenings
 - My Brain Guide



In two United States' National Institutes of Health-funded observational studies of nearly 3,000 participants followed over time, those who engaged in at least four of five healthy behaviors studied were found to have a 60 percent lower risk of dementia.¹

