

Identifying Your Needs

- **Stress Relief**
- **Positive Affirmations**
- **Journaling**



We can't control the wind, but we can set our own sails.

From *Alzheimer's Early Stages* by Dan Kuhn

Identifying Your Needs

Caring for someone with memory loss takes a significant amount of time and energy. Too often, caregivers do not recognize their own needs, fail to do anything about them, or do not know where to turn for help.

This section on identifying your needs will help you learn to recognize your needs and understand the importance of making sure that they get met.

In the end, taking time to meet your own needs will ultimately make you a better caregiver for your loved one.

Caregiver Stress

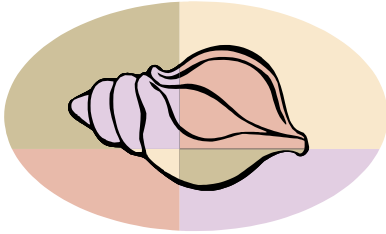
While many people find it rewarding to care for a loved one, it can be a source of increasing stress as caregivers try to compensate for declining abilities in their loved ones. The assistance a caregiver provides can take its toll by increasing the caregiver's time restraints, financial burdens, and physical and emotional health.

In fact, research has shown that dementia caregivers are more likely to experience depression and anxiety than non-caregivers. While each of us has some stress in our lives, when our stress level gets out of control, it can have negative consequences on us physically and emotionally.



The Warning Signs of Stress

Your body sends out physical, emotional, and behavioral warning signs of stress.

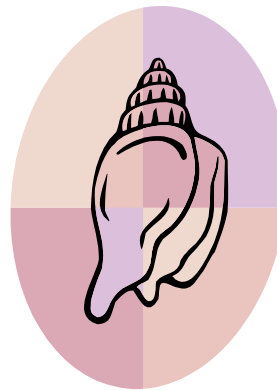


Physical Warning Signs

- Stopped posture
- Sleep disturbance
- Tension headaches
- Neck pain
- Chronic back pain
- Chronic fatigue
- More colds and illnesses

Emotional Warning Signs

- Anger/irritability
- Inability to concentrate
- Unproductive worry
- Sadness
- Feeling like the “weight of the world” is on your shoulders
- Frequent mood swings



Behavioral Warning Signs

- Compulsive eating
- Using alcohol or drugs
- Withdrawing from relationships
- Over-reacting
- Acting on impulse
- Anxiety
- Depression

10 Ways to Control Stress

- ✓ Set realistic goals and priorities; identify those things you must do first.
- ✓ Organize your time in accordance with those priorities.
- ✓ Learn to say "No" when asked to do something stressful.
- ✓ Recognize that some stress is unavoidable.
- ✓ Make a list of stressful things in your life.
- ✓ Divide the list into things that you can't avoid or control, and things that you hope to influence.
- ✓ Use your time and talents to address those stressful situations you can change.
- ✓ Don't waste your energies in a frustrating attempt to conquer what you can't control.
- ✓ Don't be afraid to ask questions, solicit suggestions, and share your problems with others.
- ✓ Do allow yourself time to enjoy personal interests or just to smell the roses.



Stress Relief Strategies

Deep Breathing:

Deep breathing is one of the easiest relaxation techniques to learn. It can be done anywhere at anytime. When we are stressed our breathing becomes shallow and more rapid. Taking a slow “Belly Breath” is one way to relieve stress in the body.



- Sit up straight (but not rigid) or lie on your back.
- Place your hands on your belly
- Close your eyes if you wish.
- Inhale slowly through your nose, feel your belly expand
- Exhale slowly, feel your belly deflate.
- Do this again feeling your breath going in and going out.
- Now try inhaling to the count of four, 1,2,3,4 and exhaling 1,2,3,4.
- Repeat 3 or 4 times.

How do you feel?

One woman used this deep breathing technique at night to fall asleep. One husband used it when he got upset with his wife. You can even do it waiting at a red light. It’s like a mini retreat in your day.

Progressive Relaxation:

Lie comfortably on your back in a quiet place. Allow yourself to become passive. Begin by taking a few deep breaths and then relaxing into your natural breathing rhythm.

Tense and release groups of muscles one at a time. Begin with your feet. Tense the muscles, hold for a count of five and then release. Move up to your lower legs. Tense, hold, and release. Continue to move up your body--- upper legs, buttocks, abdomen, chest, shoulders, arms, hands, and face.

Notice what the tension feels like as you contract each muscle group. Focus on the experience of letting go of this tension as you progressively relax parts of your body. Allow the tension to float out of your muscles as you let them go as limp as you can.

Practice this relaxation technique once or twice daily for 5-10 minutes. It is a wonderful inducement to sleep, as well as a means of releasing excess muscle tension.

Walking:

Walking is one of the best and safest all-round exercises for older adults, and it is a great stress reliever. Brisk walking strengthens the heart and lungs and improves endurance. No special skill is involved. There is no charge; and it can be done almost anywhere, in solitude or with companions. Also, it has a lower injury rate than most exercises.

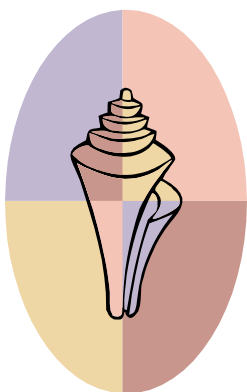
A good walking workout depends upon your stepping up your pace, increasing your distance, and walking more often. Here are some tips to help you get the most out of walking:

- Walk steadily and briskly.
- Breathe deeply through your nose or mouth, whichever is more comfortable.
- Wear comfortable clothes that allow you to take long, easy strides. In cold weather, wear several layers of light clothing so that you can remove layers as you warm up. A scarf and cap is crucial in very cold weather.
- Lean slightly forward when walking up hills, and be sure to breathe deeply.
- Land on your heel and roll forward to step off the ball of your foot. Soreness may result from walking flatfooted or only on the balls of your feet.
- Keep your head erect, shoulders back and relaxed, and your back straight. Your toes should point straight ahead and your arms should swing freely.

Using Humor to Control Stress

Have you ever noticed how you feel after a good, hard laugh?! You know the kind of laugh that has you keeled over, your eyes watering and even works out those abdominal muscles! Laughter is good medicine!

Learn from the mistakes of others. You can't live long enough to make them all yourself!



Physical effects of humor

- ✓ Relaxes muscles
- ✓ Improves circulation
- ✓ Improves digestion
- ✓ Deepens relaxation
- ✓ Releases endorphins
- ✓ Decreases levels of stress hormones
- ✓ Boosts the immune system
- ✓ Lowers blood pressure
- ✓ Improves muscle tone

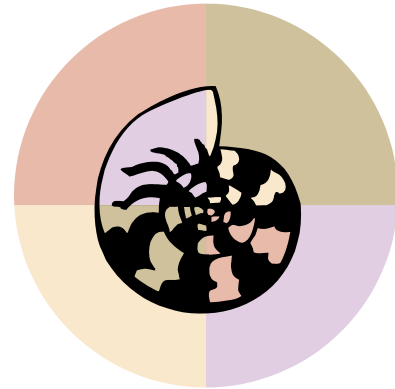
Mental and emotional effects of humor

- ✓ Works as a coping skill
- ✓ Reduces anxiety
- ✓ Shifts perception for negative to positive thoughts
- ✓ Releases tension and nervous energy
- ✓ Increases tolerance
- ✓ Increases mental energy and positive outlook

How to Add Humor to Your Life

- Put up photos or sayings that make you laugh.
- Have a laughter first aid kit.
- Watch funny movies.
- Tell a joke every day, or ask someone to tell you one.

- Remember the funniest thing that ever happened to you.
- Keep fun items around the house to pull out when you need them. Things like silly hats, bubbles, kazoos, fake noses, little toys, a laugh box or magic tricks work well.
- Read the comics.



Affirmations

Caregiving is hard work! Perhaps because of the stress that can come with caregiving or perhaps because we want to provide care beyond what is humanly possible for each of us; it is easy to get bogged down in negativity about ourselves and our ability to care for our loved ones. This can happen, too, if our loved ones with memory loss are telling us we are not doing a good enough job. When this occurs, take a moment to step back and realize that they are probably frustrated by the disease and thoughts of themselves losing control. Most often the frustration has little to do with you or the care you are providing. Affirmations can help us keep things positive. An affirmation is a statement you make to yourself. Our self-talk, the things we say to ourselves, is very important because it directly affects our conscious and subconscious mind. We listen to everything we say to ourselves.

For example, if you get up in the morning and say, "I feel great!" that is a positive affirmation. If you say, "I feel rotten," that is a negative affirmation. Both statements help to maintain the emotional state you are in. Because affirmations send messages to our conscious and subconscious mind, we can use them to change our state of mind. For some people, affirmations have become a strong, useful tool for creating positive changes in their lives.

The following tips on affirmations were adapted from the website of Dr. Thomas Yarnell, a clinical psychologist at www.affirmations.homestead.com. (Another website with good affirmation information is www.coping.org/growth/affirm.)

Guidelines for Using Affirmations:

Affirmations

- ✓ Should be stated in the present tense
- ✓ Should be stated in the first person
- ✓ Should be positive
- ✓ Should be in your style of language



What to use affirmations for

- ✓ Affirmations can be about how you would like to feel.
- ✓ Affirmations can be about something you would like to happen in your life.
- ✓ Affirmations can help you counter negative thoughts.

How to use affirmations

- ✓ Repeat affirmations four or five times, several times a day. This imprints the affirmation into your subconscious mind.
- ✓ Do your affirmations for a minimum of thirty days.
- ✓ Repeat out loud if possible.
- ✓ Say it with feeling- Get involved, be passionate and use your emotions! Think carefully about the meaning of the words as you repeat them.
- ✓ Visualize.

You don't have to believe your affirmation, at least initially, in order for it to work. Remember that your negative affirmations aren't necessarily true either! Belief in your positive affirmation will grow with forthcoming successes. What you need to do is "feel" what it would be like when the desire you are affirming is fulfilled, or your need met. Each time that you have a need that gets met, a certain feeling is produced in you. You need to evoke that same feeling when you state your affirmation. In other words, you need to feel with each fiber of your being that what you desire has already happened. Without this feeling, your affirmation is powerless.

Examples of Affirmations:



I am competent.
I am strong.

I am relaxed.

I am beautiful.
I am joyful.
I am a good person.

I am loving.
I am forgiving.

I am courageous.

I can let go of guilt.
I can let go of fear.

I can be positive.
I can be a problem solver.

I can be honest with my feelings.

I can be strong.

I can laugh and have fun.

I can control my temper.

I will take on only what I can handle.

I will take care of me.

I will manage my time better today.

I am the best friend I have.

I have solved problems like this before.

I have the ability to handle this.

I am a capable human being.

I deserve to love and to be loved.

Nothing is worth losing my sanity over.

I am responsible only for my own feelings.

I love myself for who I am.

I have the right to feel the way I do.

I deserve to relax and take it easy.

There are beautiful things happening in my daily life.

Scheduling Time Just For You

Renewing your inner spirit takes time that is well worth the investment. However, often caregivers get so caught up in taking care of their loved ones that they don't take time to focus on their inner spirit. This can lead to negative emotions, such as anger or irritability, depression, and burnout.

What many caregivers find helpful is scheduling time just for themselves. This time should be considered sacred to you. It is your time to work on and take care of you. Whether it is taking a walk, practicing a therapy, such as yoga, spending time with a friend, or doing something else you enjoy, making time for you will help you feel better on the inside. This, in turn, will help you to be a better caregiver.

Now is the time
To get into the habit
of scheduling time
just for you.

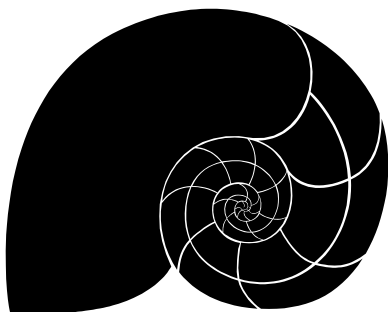


50 Natural Highs

Think about them one at a time BEFORE going on to the next one.....
IT DOES MAKE YOU FEEL GOOD, especially the thought at the end.

- Falling in love
- Laughing so hard your face hurts
- A hot shower
- No lines at the supermarket
- A special glance
- Getting mail
- Taking a drive on a pretty road
- Hearing your favorite song on the radio
- Lying in bed listening to the rain outside
- Hot towels fresh out of the dryer
- Finding the sweater you want is on sale for half price
- Chocolate milkshake (or vanilla! or strawberry)
- A long distance phone call
- A bubble bath
- Giggling
- A good conversation
- The beach
- Finding a 20 bill in your coat from last winter
- Laughing at yourself
- Midnight phone calls that last for hours
- Running through sprinklers
- Laughing for absolutely no reason at all
- Having someone tell you that you're beautiful
- Laughing at an inside joke
- Friends
- Accidentally overhearing someone say something nice about you
- Waking up and realizing you still have a few hours left to sleep
- Your first kiss (either the very first or with a new partner)

- Making new friends or spending time with old ones
- Playing with a new puppy
- Having someone play with your hair (It's the best!)
- Sweet dreams
- Hot chocolate
- Road trips with friends
- Swinging on swings
- Wrapping presents while eating cookies and drinking your favorite beverage
- Song lyrics printed inside our new CD so you can sing along
- Going to a really good concert
- Making eye contact with a cute stranger
- Winning a really competitive game
- Making chocolate chip cookies
- Having your friends send you homemade cookies
- Spending time with close friends
- Seeing smiles and hearing laughter from your friends
- Holding hands with someone you care about
- Running into an old friend and realizing that some things (good or bad) never change
- Riding the best roller coasters over and over
- Watching the expression on someone's face as they open a much desired present from you
- Watching the sunrise
- Getting out of bed every morning and being grateful for another beautiful day



WORDS OF WISDOM

- Take things as they come – don't think too far ahead.
- Know you cannot make life perfect for the one you care for – life is not perfect.
- Lower your expectations.
- Make duplicate keys.
- Stand up and stretch – a BIG stretch!
- Keep a gratitude journal.
- Always make copies of important papers.
- Know your limitations and let others know them too.
- Quit trying to fix other people.
- Don't rely on your memory – write it down!
- Find someone you can trust and share your feelings. Allow them to be honest with you.
- Write your feelings and thoughts in a journal.
- Say "No" more often.
- Do everything in moderation.
- Pray.
- Become a better listener.
- Freely praise other people.
- Accept that you can't do everything.
- Let things go if you're too weary to do them. Dishes can stay in a sink for days if necessary.

- Don't lose sight of your blessings.
- Get up 15 minutes earlier.
- Always have a plan B.
- Ask for help with the jobs you dislike.
- Avoid negative people.
- Repair anything that doesn't work properly.
- Throw away a third of the stuff in your closets.
- Share your feelings – talk to a friend or counselor.
- Try to take one day at a time – even one hour at a time.
- Read inspirational material.
- Count to ten before reacting.
- Forgive old grudges.
- Nurture your spiritual connection to whatever you believe in.
- Set priorities in your life.
- Let things unfold.
- Nap whenever you can.
- Talk less and listen more.
- Seek professional help when talking to friends isn't enough.
- Never go to sleep feeling angry or guilty.
- Stop saying negative things to yourself.

Journaling

One great way to be able to identify your needs is through journaling. Journaling provides a means to look deep inside, exploring the inner world of the self by capturing our thoughts and feelings on paper. Seeing what we are thinking allows us to work through our thoughts in new ways and provides a special self-awareness that promotes change. This openness to new ways of thinking can transform our lives.

Journaling is simple, yet effective. It is one of the most powerful tools for self-growth. Journaling can also simply be used as a release. Some people choose to use a journal for creative writing. This provides a break from caregiving and a different focus that caregivers often find helpful and refreshing.

Journaling can help you:

- Grasp valuable insights
- Gain perspective to uncover and nurture the bigger picture of your life
- Spark your innate creativity
- Clear confusion and come to good decisions more easily
- Release negative emotions, like pain, fear, and anger



Those who find good in each day
live longer, happier, more peaceful,
and more fruitful lives.

You don't have to be a great writer, perfect speller, or creative thinker to keep a personal journal. You can simply write down your thoughts, experiences, and reflections. Some people even illustrate their journals with pictures, sketches, or mementos.

Gratefulness Journal:

Another type of journal is a gratefulness journal. Research has found that those who count their blessings, both large and small feel better about their lives. To start a gratefulness journal, all you do is write down at least three different things that you are thankful or grateful for each day. You can write down large, important matters like the relationship you have with your spouse. But, you can also write about smaller things that happen in a day, such as when a person held the elevator for you that day. The important thing is to write down and reflect on the blessings and happiness in your life on a particular day. This will help you develop a more positive perspective and attitude, which will lead to increased happiness and contentment. More information on journaling is found on pp. 19 -27.

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Some people choose to use a journal for creative writing. This provides a break from thinking about memory loss and it provides a different focus that can be helpful and refreshing.

A woman once wrote, "I began these pages for myself, in order to think out my own particular pattern of living, my own individual balance of life, work, and human relationships. And since I think best with a pencil in hand, I started naturally to write." With that, Anne Morrow Lindbergh, wife

of aviator Charles Lindbergh, began her best known work, "Gift from the Sea." This book is written in journal format and provides deep insight into the writer's inner thoughts. Journaling can help you:

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I am grateful for

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

I am grateful to

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Journal Writing Prompts

If you are just starting to write in a journal or have temporarily run out of steam, here are some ideas.

- Look at a magazine and find a picture that appeals to you. Cut it out, paste it in your notebook and write about it.
- Draw a word portrait of your interior landscape. Next draw a word portrait of your exterior landscape.
- Invent a dream you wish you'd had. Write about it in detail, paying special attention to concrete sensory images.
- Write a dream that a plant, a fish, a star, or a stone might have.
- List all of the things that have happened to you only once in your entire life.
- Write about an event in your life – first from your perspective and then from the perspective of someone else who was present.
- Write about a person or an event that is a paradox or contradiction.
- Turn a feeling – love, joy, beauty, anger or fatigue – into a character. Write a detailed description and dialog with this character.

- Allow your pen to give voice to a part of your body besides your mind. Have this part write a letter to you. Write a response.
- If you were to select music for a soundtrack of the day you've had, what songs would you play in the background? Why?
- Invent a new myth for the beginning of the universe.
- Write down everything that comes into your mind about money.
- Pick the first date from the past and place that pop into your mind. Now write a journal entry as though you were reliving a former lifetime.
- Write about a belief you've discarded.
- Your life is a journey. From where? To where? Write a travel article about this trip.
- Write an entry telling another person something that you are too afraid or reluctant to tell them.

Source: www.kporterfield.com

100 Benefits of Journaling

Stress reduction:

- Reduces the scatter in your life
- Increases focus
- Brings stability
- Offers a deeper level of learning, order, action and release
- Holds thoughts still so they can be changed and integrated
- Processes your stuff in a natural and appropriate way
- Releases pent-up thoughts and emotions
- Empowers
- Disentangles thoughts and ideas
- Bridges inner thinking with outer events
- Detaches and lets go of the past
- Allows you to re-experience the past with today's adult mind



Healing:

- Heals relationships
- Heals the past
- Dignifies all events
- Is honest, trusting, non-judgmental
- Strengthens your sense of yourself
- Balances and harmonizes
- Recalls and reconstructs past events
- Acts as your own counselor
- Integrates peaks and valleys in life
- Soothes troubled memories
- Sees yourself as a larger, important, whole and connected being
- Leverages therapy sessions for better and faster results
- Reveals and tracks patterns and cycles

Know yourself and your truth better:

- Builds self confidence and self knowledge
- Records the past
- Brings out natural beauty and wisdom
- Helps you feel better about yourself
- Helps you identify your values
- Reads your own mind
- Aids in connecting causes to effects
- Reveals the depths of who you are
- Reveals outward expression of yet unformed inner impulses
- Creates mystery
- Clarifies thoughts, feelings and behavior
- Reveals your greater potential
- Shifts you to the observer, recorder, counselor level
- Reveals your processes - how you think, learn, create and use intuition
- Creates awareness of beliefs and options so you can change them
- Self-discovery
- Reveals different aspects of self

- Helps you see yourself as an individual
- Connects you to the bigger picture
- Is a close, intimate, accepting, trusting, caring, honest, non-judgmental, perfect friend
- Accesses the unconscious, subconscious and super consciousness
- Finds the missing pieces and the unsaid
- Helps rid you of the masks you wear
- Helps solve the mysteries of life
- Finds more meaning in life

Personal growth:

- Enables you to live life to the fullest
- Is fun, playful and sometimes humorous
- Expresses and creates
- Plants seeds
- Starts the sorting and grouping process
- Integrates life experiences
- Moves you towards wholeness and growth, to who you really are
- Creates more results in life
- Explores your spirituality
- Focuses and clarifies your desires and needs
- Enhances self expression
- Enhances career and community
- Allows freedom of expression
- Offers progressive inner momentum to static unrelated events
- Exercises your mental muscles
- Improves congruency and integrity
- Enhances breakthroughs
- Unfolds the writer in you
- Maximizes time and business efficiency
- Explores night dreams, day dreams and fantasies
- Measures and tracks what is important

Easier problem solving:

- Eases decision making
- Offers new perspectives

- Brings things together
- Shows relationships and wholeness instead of separation

It's flexible and easy:

- Can be applied to clarify any issue in your life
- Takes so little time to stop, pay attention and listen to yourself
- Meets your needs, style, processing methods
- Caters to left and right brained people
- Has no rules - messiness, typos, poor writing are all OK
- Is often self-starting and motivating and supplies its own energy

Enhances intuition and creativity:

- Improves self trust
- Awakens the inner voice
- Directs intention and discernment
- Provides insights
- Improves sensitivity
- Interprets your symbols and dreams
- Increases memory of events

Captures your life story:

- Teaches you how to write stories
- Soothes troubled memories
- Captures family and personal story
- Stimulates personal growth
- Improves family unity

Source: www.appleseeds.org



Journaling Techniques

Reflective Writing:

Be an observer of your life. Write about events that are happening to you or around you, in a way that helps put them into perspective. This is especially effective when writing about life changes, job or career, relationships or illness.

Begin writing with the phrase, "It was a time when...", then let yourself describe the event in detail, use as many of your senses as possible. What were the sounds, smells, sights, feelings, etc. that were present?

Write about the event as though you were observing yourself. Use "she" and "he" rather than "I" in your sentences. Describe the activities as an outside observer. Frequently this helps give perspective to an otherwise very personal experience.

Cathartic Writing:

Write about your feelings, all of them. Put your pain, fear, anger, frustrations, and grief down on paper. Say what you want to say, need to say, on the page. The journal won't judge or criticize you. You can use it as a safe place to let out everything you feel.

Sometimes you may choose to throw away your writing, or burn it as a rite of letting go of the event or feeling disrupting your life. Let your intuition lead you in your writing, and in what to do with the words once you've written them. Try it when you're feeling joy and gratitude, too.

Begin with the phrase, "Right now I feel...", then let yourself write whatever comes out. If you run out of feelings, re-read what you've just written and then write the next thing that comes to mind.

Unsent Letters:

You can write a letter in your journal to a person, place, event, or belief. The journal gives you a powerful way to express what you experience and feel about any situation. Your journal will give you a place to express your true feelings when you may not feel comfortable doing it more directly. This technique is especially helpful in dealing with death or divorce.

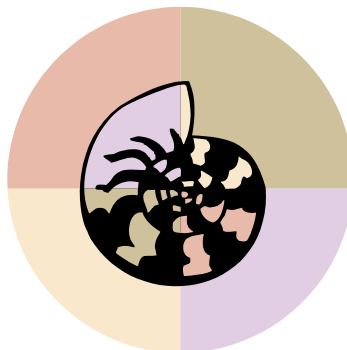
These are situations where we may not be able to talk with the person directly. It is also a powerful way to process the emotions that come up on the job or in a relationship. How about frustrations with your kids?

Begin with a salutation, just as you would if you were writing a letter, "Dear....". Then let your pen and paper lead you. You may be surprised at the power and clarity you experience from your writing. Your journal may be just a starting place for a whole new level of communication with others.

While you are writing, or after you've written, you may feel deep emotions. They're normal and healthy. In fact, the emotional release is just what contributes to the healthy impact of journaling. If you want to do more with what you've written, share it with a friend, counselor, clergy or physician.

Your writing is for your health, not for public display. Make sure that members of your household know that you're writing in your journal and that you want it to be private. You will find that others are very respectful of your writing, especially when you ask them to treat it that way.

Add journaling to your tool kit of ways to keep yourself healthy. Its benefits will go far beyond the pages you fill.



The Caregivers Bill of Rights

By Stacey Matzkevich, MSG, MSW, LCSW

- * You have the right to receive the knowledge, resources, training and support you need to be successful as a caregiver.
- * You have the right to acknowledge your needs and to expect those needs to be met.
- * You have the right to enjoy a well-rounded and meaningful life that includes family, friends, work, activities you love and time to yourself.
- * You have the right to seek and accept help from community, family, friends and support services.
- * You have the right to access quality services that treat you and the person you are caring for with dignity and consideration.
- * You have the right to all of your feelings as a caregiver, from the moments of unexpected joy to those of anger and frustration.
- * You have the right to be a part of a caregiving team rather than having to do it all by yourself.
- * You have the right to ask for and receive appreciation and respect for your caregiving.
- * You have the right to acknowledge that the unique gift of your time, energy and emotions have as much value as any caregiving task.

Brilliant Insights from Persons Living with Memory Loss

1. Both my daughters are very busy. I've learned to be selective in what I ask them to do. I want to be sure that I can't do it myself.
2. I was used to keeping all the balls in the air. Now they are falling down around me. It's so tiring.
3. My words leave me sometimes. This is the hardest thing. It's embarrassing when the words won't come out.
4. Things that make me feel better: playing with grandchildren, exercise, working around the house, keeping busy, staying around positive people.
5. The important thing is hanging in there when you can't change what's happening now.
6. I'm finding more enjoyment in the day. I try not to worry about tomorrow.
7. It feels good to be needed.

Words from a Son

I want my Mom to be happy – and safe.

I want her to have her dignity.

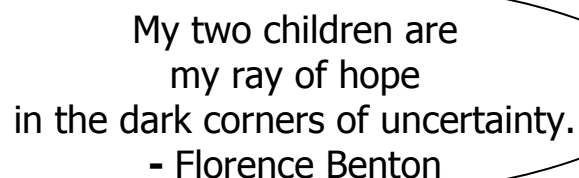
I don't want a dark cloud over her.

I want us to have fun together.

I don't want to be her caretaker – I want to be her son.

By Jim Eneix

8. I keep saying I don't remember. My wife thinks it's a cop-out, but I really don't remember. I can remember way back, but I can't remember yesterday.
9. I get all tangled up and angry at myself
10. When I get frustrated working at something, I put it aside. I say to myself, today's not the day.
11. Your day is going well and then it runs out
12. Sometimes people are speaking so fast, it sounds like mush.
13. When several people are talking, it's hard for me to interject. I need a sign that says, "My turn"!
14. If I don't get things out fast enough, my wife finishes. I'd like to finish what I'm talking about.
15. I'm very frightened, I think. I'm only 57 and I'd like to hang around awhile to see what happens.



My two children are
my ray of hope
in the dark corners of uncertainty.
- Florence Benton

16. I'm not as angry as I was.
17. I'm determined to be a winner. I'm going to keep pushing until I can't push anymore.
18. Sometimes I have this feeling that I don't know where I'm going. I say, "God, please show me the way".

To all our families
Thank you
We love you!

Learning Together II Leaders Manual: Family Members

Identifying Your Needs

Supplies:

Handouts for workbooks (3-hole-punched, paper clipped to take home)

Discussion handout (copy at end):

1. *Caregiver Bill of Rights*

1. Welcome individuals; introduce any new family. If several families are entering the group, ask participants to introduce themselves, noting who they are caring for. Mention confidentiality.
2. At the last meeting, we talked about doing something special – something just for you. Open to anyone who would like to share what he or she did.
3. The focus of this month is identifying your needs. The handouts for your workbook offer several ways to become more aware of:
 - How you are doing: your level of stress / other demands?
 - Who do you turn to for support? Is this support enough?
 - What specific needs do you have right now?

**Each person is different!
No one can go it alone!**

4. Leaders may share their personal experience in identifying their needs and reaching out for help or support.
5. Open to group to share techniques they use to relax; their experience with journaling.
6. Pass out/read handout, *Caregiver Bill of Rights*, p. 26.
7. May end with personal examples of positive self-affirmations, reassuring words you say to yourself to feel better.

The Caregivers Bill of Rights

By Stacey Matzkevich, MSG, MSW, LCSW

- * You have the right to receive the knowledge, resources, training and support you need to be successful as a caregiver.
- * You have the right to acknowledge your needs and to expect those needs to be met.
- * You have the right to enjoy a well-rounded and meaningful life that includes family, friends, work, activities you love and time to yourself.
- * You have the right to seek and accept help from community, family, friends and support services.
- * You have the right to access quality services that treat you and the person you are caring for with dignity and consideration.
- * You have the right to all of your feelings as a caregiver, from the moments of unexpected joy to those of anger and frustration.
- * You have the right to be a part of a caregiving team rather than having to do it all by yourself.
- * You have the right to ask for and receive appreciation and respect for your caregiving.
- * You have the right to acknowledge that the unique gift of your time, energy and emotions have as much value as any caregiving task.