THE CAREGIVER JOURNEY TO EMOTIONAL WELLNESS

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Alzheimer’s Association Programs
- 24/7 Helpline 1.800.272.3900
- Care Consultation/REACH
- Early Stage Social Engagement Program (Meetup)
- Online Caregiver Center
  - Community Resource Finder
  - Free online education training
- Support Groups
  - Alzconnected.com
- Medic Alert/Safe Return
- Community Education
- Trial Match/Research
- Advocacy/Public Policy

Age Well Arrowhead Programs
- Care Consultation
- Caregiver Support Services
  - Caregiver Counseling
  - REACH
  - Powerful Tool for Caregivers
- Family Meeting Facilitation
- Help-in-The-Home:
  - Homemaker, Chore
  - Transportation
  - Groceries-to-Go
  - Companionhip
  - Transition Assistance
  - Memory Café
  - Dementia Training for Businesses
Our trip today...

- Define caregiving/risk factors/impact on rural caregivers
- Discuss Thoughts and Emotions
- Explore at least three strategies to cope and reduce stress related to caregiver risk factors

What is Caregiving?
Warning Signs of Stress

1. Denial about the disease and its effect on the person who has been diagnosed. I know Mom is going to get better.
2. Anger at the person with Alzheimer's or frustration that he or she can't do the things they used to be able to do. He knows how to get dressed — he's just being stubborn.
3. Social withdrawal from friends and activities that used to make you feel good. I don't care about visiting with the neighbors anymore.
4. Anxiety about the future and facing another day. What happens when he needs more care than I can provide?
5. Depression that breaks your spirit and affects your ability to cope. I just don't care anymore.
6. Exhaustion that makes it nearly impossible to complete necessary daily tasks. I'm too tired for this.
7. Sleeplessness caused by a never-ending list of concerns. What if she wanders out of the house or falls and hurts herself?
8. Irritability that leads to moodiness and triggers negative responses and actions. Leave me alone!
9. Lack of concentration that makes it difficult to perform familiar tasks. I was so busy, I forgot my appointment.
10. Health problems that begin to take a mental and physical toll. I can't remember the last time I felt good.

- Source: Caregiver Stress Checklist – Alzheimer’s Association, 2018, alz.org

Impact on Rural Caregivers

“Bumps along the way”/ Challenges
- Long Disease Process
- Continual Changes
- Access to Resources
- Stigma
- Disparity in Training Awareness
- Isolation
- Safety Risks
1: Mindfulness

S - STOP
T - Take a Step Back
O - Observe
P - Proceed Mindfully

NOTE: There are many thoughts and feelings after receiving a diagnosis. There is no right or wrong way to process the diagnosis.

What comes to mind when you hear the word dementia?

Swamp Metaphor

(Images of a swamp and wildlife)
### Grief

- **Ambiguity**
- **Anticipatory**
  - No emotion is “good” or “bad”
  - Emotions are normal
  - Our emotions are always changing
  - Emotions are connected to our thoughts and behaviors

### On the plus side...

**Advantages to Rural Caregiving:**
- Creating Moments of Joy
- Continual Changes
- Community as Family
- Empathy, Personal/Connectedness
- Physical Environments

**Benefits of caregiving**
- Opportunity for: laughter, different relationship, learn about them and yourself. Connect in a new way, slow us down
- Bring family together, community
- Explore new hobbies, activities, talents
- Sense of purpose
- Opportunity to learn about your own health and make changes/challenge yourself.

### Moments of Joy

- Getting into bed with fresh, clean sheets
- Camping/Hiking
- Smell of campfires (esp. in Fall)
- Birds of Paradise
- Family/ community gatherings
- The smell (and taste) of baked good with cinnamon.
- Falling asleep/waking up to sounds of waves on a lake.
- Sun puddles
- Early morning light
- Coffee
- Hiking/ running
- Family friend time
- Spring smells
- Late fall breeze
- 5 minutes of extra sleep
Thoughts Versus Feelings

- I don't want to be a bother.
- How will I pay for care?
- Where do I start?
- I am overwhelmed.
- There is too much to do.
- I am frustrated I don't have as much time to do what I enjoy.
- I am scared.

Thought Record

Scenario: You are trying to get stuff done around the house but your spouse who has been diagnosed with dementia keeps following you very closely and will not leave your side.

- Thought: "My spouse is so annoying! I will never get anything done that I should. UGGH!"
- Feeling: Annoyed, Angry, Guilty
- Do: Avoid, Isolate, Snap at Spouse

Change

- Alternative Thought: "My spouse must trust me and feel safe."
- Feeling: Less stressed (manageable for today), More Hopeful, Sense of Importance
- Do: Continue with your task, Engage spouse in helping, Cherish the role of safe person
3: Relaxation Techniques

- Deep Breathing
- Guided Imagery
- Muscle Tension and Relaxation
- Mindful Meditative Activities
Resources

- "Loving Someone Who Has Dementia" by: Pauline Boss, PhD
- "Creating Moments of Joy" by: Jolene Brackey
- "Coach Broyles Playbook for Alzheimer’s Caregivers" by: Frank Broyles
- Thought Record Sheet: Therapist Aid 2012: www.therapistaid.com
be good to yourself