



# CARING

A service of your *Caring for the Mind* and  
Employee Assistance Programs

## Alzheimer's Caregivers and Stress

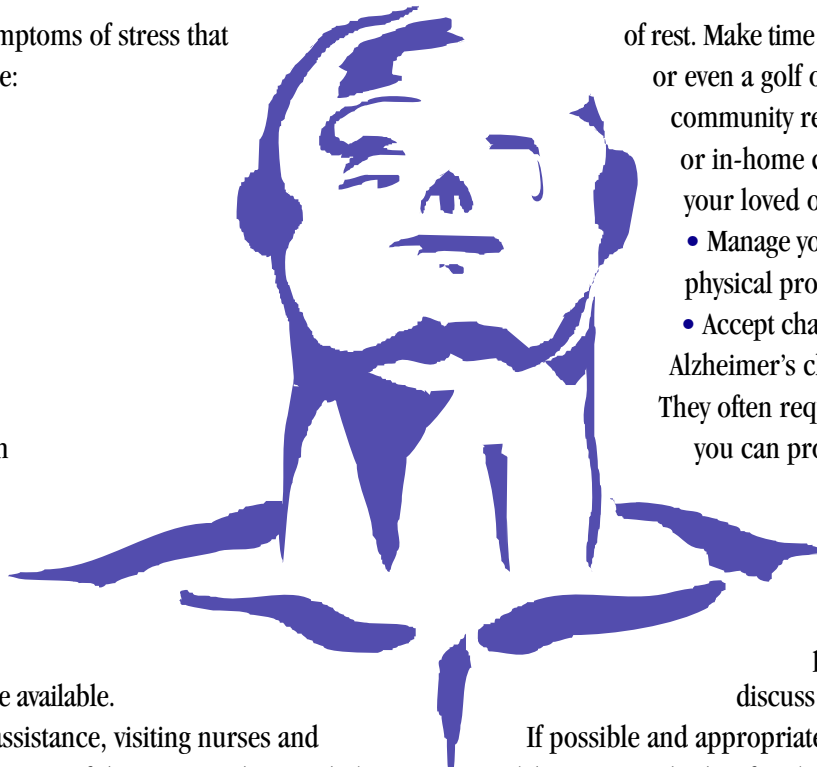
*Caring for a person with Alzheimer's is an important but very demanding and stressful task. Taking care of your physical and mental health as the caregiver is extremely important in order to better care for the person with Alzheimer's.*

Listed below are some symptoms of stress that caregivers may experience:

- Denial
- Anger
- Social Withdrawal
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Exhaustion
- Sleeplessness
- Irritability
- Lack of Concentration
- Health Problems

*Here are some tips to help you, the caregiver, maintain your health:*

- Know what resources are available. Adult day care, in-home assistance, visiting nurses and Meals-on-Wheels are just some of the services that can help you.
- Become an educated caregiver. As the disease progresses, new caregiving skills are necessary.
- Get help. You are not failing as a caregiver by asking others for assistance. Seek the support of family, friends and community resources.
- Take care of yourself. Watch your diet, exercise and get plenty



of rest. Make time for shopping, lunch with friends or even a golf outing. Take advantage of community resources such as adult day care or in-home companion services to care for your loved one while you take a break.

- Manage your stress level. Stress can cause physical problems and changes in behavior.
- Accept changes as they occur. People with Alzheimer's change and so do their needs.

They often require care beyond what you can provide on your own. Look into care services such as in-home caregiver services or residential care.

- Do legal and financial planning. Consult an attorney to discuss legal, financial and care issues.

If possible and appropriate, involve the person with Alzheimer's and other family members.

- Be realistic. Many of the behaviors that occur are beyond your control and the control of the person with Alzheimer's. Grieve your losses, but also focus on the positive moments.
- Give yourself credit, not guilt. You are doing the best you can. Don't feel guilty because you can't do more. Your loved one needs you, and you are there – that should make you feel proud.

# Five Quick Tips to Stay Focused at Work

1. Write out a daily task list and plan your day. This will help you avoid working on projects that are not priority.
2. Know your peak times. If you have repetitive tasks for your job, plan those projects for the time of day that you feel your best. If you tend to come in to work with more energy than after lunch, plan your repetitive tasks for the morning. This will allow you to fully focus on these tasks without your mind wandering.
3. Organize your desk space to stay focused on one task at a time. If it takes you more than five minutes to look for something that is
4. wasted time and could lead you down another road with another project you stumble upon.
4. Drink plenty of water to stay hydrated. Keeping yourself hydrated will keep your mind sharp and help to keep you on task.
5. Reduce unplanned interruptions. Phone calls, emails and unplanned visits are sometimes unavoidable; however, try to keep these to a minimum so that your mind can get into a groove without being interrupted and distracted.

## Stuck in the Middle: The Sandwich Generation

*More than 10 million Baby Boomers are stuck in the middle by caring for their own children (and sometimes grandchildren) and their elderly parents at the same time. More often than not, this generation is also trying to focus on their career while being the primary caregiver and financial support for the family.*

It's hard enough in today's world without having to worry about the three-headed monster: college tuition, retirement and caring for elderly parents. But if you take some time now to determine your goals and work on a plan, you are going to save yourself stress and expense in the long run. Here are some ways you can prepare for the future:

- Start saving for the costs of college as soon as possible.
- Try to control your debt, especially installment debts like car payments, credit cards, personal loans, etc.
- Review your financial goals regularly and make a back-up plan to accommodate for unexpected issues that may arise such as the illness of a parent or the need to pick up the payment of a school loan.
- Invest in your own future by participating in a retirement plan.
- Talk to your parents about the plans they've made for the future. Do they have long-term care insurance? Adequate retirement income? Know where all important documents are and get a list of the professionals and friends they rely on for advice and support.



## Nine Ways to Get Yourself Out of a Bad Mood Into a Great One!

Bad moods magnify trivial annoyances and dampen enjoyment. Once you get to the root of the problem, use these quick-fix tactics to restore emotional equilibrium.

- **Eat chocolate.** It prompts the release of serotonin, the brain's natural chemical upper. Eat slowly, savoring the sweetness and texture. Limit yourself to two pieces – a chocolate binge will only make you feel worse later.
- **Play with a toy.** Something as simple as a yo-yo or wind-up toy can distract your mind and relax your body.
- **Get active.** A quick walk also prompts the release of endorphins and provides a change of scenery to distract you from problems.
- **Shift the focus away from your bad mood by doing something for others** – send a funny card to a friend... do volunteer work.
- **Listen to music.** Familiar songs evoke pleasant memories and good feelings. If singing along helps, belt it out!
- **Contact someone who makes you feel good.** Simply ask that

person to help you cheer up or bask in the flow of his/her positive outlook. Just being around a child, for instance, may awaken your own natural joy and enable you to regain your perspective. In case you can't reach anyone, keep a photo of a loved one handy. Important: Avoid people who bring you down.

- **Give yourself a break.** Choose a task to postpone or delegate... Cancel dinner plans so you can enjoy a restful evening. Helpful: Carve out 15 minutes to recharge. Meditate... take a catnap... or just close your eyes and visualize comforting, enjoyable experiences.
- **Get a massage.** Beyond easing muscle aches, a massage makes you feel indulged. When stuck at your desk, gently massage your own neck, shoulders – even your feet.
- **Play with your pet.** It has a soothing effect on heartbeat, blood pressure and respiration rate.

—Sandra A. Crowe  
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### About CARING

**CARING** is a quarterly publication of the Business Resource Center of the Pastoral Institute. It is designed as a resource to help you cope with the challenges of daily living at home and at work. Your *Caring for the Mind* and Employee Assistance Programs provide counseling for you and your family when you face personal and family concerns. To make an appointment in Columbus, call (706) 649-6500. In Lanett, AL, call (334) 644-1172. In other areas, call (800) 649-6446 to get a referral to a counselor in your area.

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