

A SIMPLE GUIDE

ISSUE 68 AUG/SEPT 2022

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Dear Readers,

We are fast speeding into the second half of 2022 and at the rate things are changing around us, it can sometimes feel overwhelming.

In this issue, we addressed the importance of mental health. Many of us take on the role of caregiving and although this is rewarding, it can carry a significant toll on our mental health. Read on to find out how to look after yourself if you are a caregiver. Remember, self-care always comes first!

On the topic of self-care, learn to be kind to yourself and your emotions. We will be sharing tips on how to process our anger in a constructive manner.

As the proverbs say, "A joyful heart is good medicine, but a broken spirit dries up the bones". Looking after your emotions will go a long way in maintaining your overall health. Stay well and safe always!

By Dr Linsey Utami Gani
ECHO Programme Director



CLINICIAN'S SHARING

CARING FOR THE CAREGIVER

Learn what caregiver stress is and how to manage it

YOU ARE NOT YOUR ANGER

Understanding anger and healthy ways to deal with it

This newsletter is jointly brought to you by:

CARING FOR THE CAREGIVER

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Caregiving is a demanding and sometimes thankless task. Caring for your loved ones can be immensely rewarding but faced with the various responsibilities and demands of caregiving, it becomes common for caregivers to show signs of stress or burnout.

What are the symptoms of caregiver stress?

- Anxiety or feeling low
- Feeling tired and run down
- Difficulty sleeping
- Overreacting to minor nuisances
- New or worsening health problems
- Feeling increasingly resentful
- Neglecting responsibilities or neglecting to rest
- Drinking, smoking, or eating more



Tips to manage caregiver stress:

1 Get informed on your care recipient's condition.

Knowledge can help to decrease self-doubt in fulfilling the caregiving role. Don't be afraid to ask your care recipient's doctor for more information about their illness. Caregiver training courses specific to their condition may be available. Check with the Agency for Integrated Care (aic.sg/caregiving; 1800 650 6060) or the Caregivers' Alliance Limited (ca.org.sg) for an updated listing of courses, or ask your doctor.

2 Improve your relationship with your care recipient.

Caregiving can introduce inequities into your relationship that did not exist before. There is evidence that these inequalities can be especially detrimental to caregivers of spouses. If your care recipient has the capacity, talk with them about getting your needs met in other ways, e.g. appreciation and affection.

It is also challenging to care for a family member with whom you have always had a difficult relationship. Consider seeking psychotherapy to work through these tough feelings from the past.

3 Get support.

Caregivers often need practical support, e.g. with housekeeping, transportation, or keeping the care recipient company while they attend to personal matters. Consider delegating some of these tasks to family or friends, or hire professional help. NTUC Health (ntuhealth.sg, 6715 6715) offers home care services or placement at day care centres.

Emotional support is also important. Remember to share your feelings with family and friends. Support groups can be helpful, as sometimes only fellow caregivers can truly understand what you are going through. Ask your care recipient's doctor for an up-to-date listing of support groups, or request a referral to a social worker who can link you up. When signs of stress are severe or unremitting, consider seeking help from a mental health professional.

4 Change your perspective on caregiving.

Studies have found that a) finding meaning in caregiving and b) recognising ways that caregiving had helped them grow, has protected caregivers against burnout. Ask yourself: What values led you to take on the role of caregiving? If caregiving fell to you by default, what values made you stick with it? Is there any way you have grown by meeting this challenge?

5 Carve out small, non-negotiable pockets of self-care.

Set aside a non-negotiable 10-20 minutes a day to do something you enjoy. Having delegated some tasks to family or hired help, consider "bite-sized" ways to reclaim leisure activities. For example, if you used to paint, consider small pencil sketches instead. Remember, it is not possible to pour from an empty cup.



YOU ARE NOT YOUR ANGER

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Anger is an emotional state that varies from mild annoyance to intense rage. It is accompanied by physiological and biological changes, such as an increase in heart rate and blood pressure, as well as a release of stress hormones. Anger is subjective and is often triggered by an external encounter.

Common myths about anger:

Myth 1: Anger is a wrong and bad emotion



Anger is not a “bad” or “wrong” emotion. In contrary, it is a normal emotional response that hints at a situation that is unjust, threatening, or upsetting. In fact, a lot of good things can stem from anger, and an angry feeling can lead to a positive change.

Myth 2: Anger always result in bad behaviour

A lot of people confuse angry feelings with aggressive behaviour. Healthy ways in dealing with anger will prevent resorting to lose of control, threats or violence. The bigger problem is not the emotion itself, but how one express and behave when angry. Sometimes, we lose control and do things like throwing a tantrum, shouting at others, or expressing our anger in ways that are harmful to ourselves and other people. Our angry behaviour can cause problems for us and affect our relationships. When you noticed your anger signal, call for a time out, make a choice to walk away first and practice breathing techniques and calming exercises.



“
For every minute you
are angry, you lose
sixty seconds of
happiness
”

- Ralph Waldo Emerson -

Myth 3: Venting your anger will help to release it

Punching your pillow, trashing the room, or screaming to your heart's content doesn't actually "release" one's pent up rage. In fact, research suggests that venting your anger in this way actually has the opposite effect - the more one vent, the worse one may feel. Instead transform your anger into something constructive, learn to response assertively.

Myth 4: Ignoring your anger will not make it go away

Suppressing anger isn't healthy. Smiling to cover up your frustration, denying your angry feelings, or allowing others to treat you poorly in an effort to keep the peace, can cause your anger to turn inward. Long term suppressed anger has been linked to a variety of physical and mental health issues, from hypertension to depression. Learn to understand the function of your angry emotions. Identify your own anger triggers, pay attention to the early warning signs that you're growing angry.



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BUT TOO BUSY TO ACT?

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A SingHealth community programme



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- **Be recommended to selected health screening(s)*** if you are eligible
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Should the patient be referred by his or her GP via GPFirst, he or she will:

- Be accorded higher priority over non-emergency cases
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For more information, visit www.GPFirst.sg

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