

Mental Health Minute

Caregiver Stress



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According to the Alzheimer's Association, those that are caring for a person with a form of dementia report that they frequently experience high levels of stress. Too much stress can be damaging to both a caregiver and the person with dementia.

Here are some signs or symptoms of Caregiver Stress:

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

If you are not able to maintain a healthy lifestyle for your self then you may not be able to provide continued support for the person who you are caring for.

Be a Healthy Caregiver:

- **Know what resources are available** – Adult day cares are a great way of helping you get the help that you need. Also, visiting nurses, visiting caregiver programs or meals on wheels can help provide you with assistance.
- **Become and educated caregiver** – As the disease progresses, new caregiving skills are necessary. Check with your local aging office or hospital for upcoming educational sessions.
- **Get Help** – There are many places that you can get help or assistance from others. This does not mean that you are failing as a caregiver. **ASK FOR HELP!!!**
- **Take care of yourself** – Watch your diet, exercise and get plenty of rest. Also, make time for you to go shopping or have lunch with a friend, this will help you better care for your loved one.
- **Manage your stress levels** – Stress can cause physical problems and changes in your behavior. If you experience symptoms of caregiver stress, use relaxation techniques that work for you and consult your doctor.
- **Accept changes as they occur** – People with Alzheimer's or another form of memory impairment or health concern change and so do their needs. They may often require beyond what you are able to provide so reach out for help.

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Caregiver Stress

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- **Legal and Financial Planning** – Consult an attorney to discuss legal, financial and care issues.
- **Be realistic** – Some of the behaviors are beyond your control and the control of the person that you are caring for. Grieve your losses, but also focus on the positive moments.
- **Give yourself credit, not guilt** – You are doing the best that you can. Don't feel guilty because you can not do more. Your loved one needs you!

Information from Alzheimer's Association

www.alz.org

Alcohol and the Elderly

According to an article published in the *Elder Law Journal*, about one-sixth of Americans over age 60 drink too much. About a third of this group are "late onset drinkers," folks who have not overdone alcohol their whole lives but take to drinking late in life to deal with emotional and physical difficulties.

Although alcohol and substance abuse is statistically at epidemic proportions among the elderly, it remains for the most part unreported, undiagnosed, or ignored.

The reasons that substance abuse by our senior citizens goes undetected are varied, but most have to do with the fact they are no longer active in mainstream society and there is simply no one around to notice.

Of the 86% of elderly patients who end up getting treatment for a history of binge drinking, 76% began drinking heavily in mid or late life according to a study done in Canada.

Information from

www.about.com

www.consumeraffairs.com

www.webmd.com

Mental Health Minute: enriching lives one step at a time

The information in this newsletter is intended to be general information and should not be constructed as medical advice or instruction. Readers should consult with their physician on any matter related to their individual health and well-being.