



Caregiver Support

Anna Nesovic, DNP, FNP-BC

Cheri Pfeiffer, LCSW

Lanette Dalley, LCSW

What is a caregiver?

"A caregiver is a person who tends to the needs or concerns of a person with short or long-term limitations due to illness, injury or disability".

A caregiver is one leg of a three-legged stool in caring for the person who needs assistance. The other legs of the stool are the professional caregivers (providers, nurses), and the care recipient is the third leg.

(John Hopkins Medicine, 2024).

Do you assist with:

Meal preparation

Transportation

Organizing medications

Monitoring medical conditions

Communicate with healthcare professionals

Advocate for the care recipient

Bathing, showering, dressing

Housework

The importance of caregivers

- In Montana there are 112,000 family caregivers
- 105 million hours of unpaid family care
- 1.8 billion estimated economic value in Montana
- This is an increase of approximately \$350 million increase in unpaid contributions in Montana since 2019 to 2023

• (AARP, 2023).

Nursing home closures

- Since April of 2022 there have been 9 Long Term Care Facilities closed in Montana.
- This has led to 700 less LTC beds available in Montana.
- In Carbon County, Cedar Wood Villa closed in September of 2022
- The Willows Assisted Living also closed in 2023

• (DPHHS, N.D.)

What is caregiver burnout?

- State of mental, emotional and/or physical exhaustion that can happen when the caregiver dedicates time and energy to manage the health and safety of someone else.
- Feelings of tiredness, anxiety, depression and withdrawn
- Studies have shown that more than 60% of caregivers experience signs and symptoms of burnout



Communication

Being aware of body language

- Stand or sit where the person can see and hear you – try to be eye level, not standing over the top of them
- Have your body language be open and relaxed
- Be aware of guarding and facial expressions

Listening

- Be an active listener and listen carefully to what they have to say
- Offer encouragement both verbally and non-verbally, make eye contact, use appropriate facial expressions, nod.
- Read their body language
- Ask the person to repeat themselves if you did not understand what they meant

Tips for questions

- Try to avoid asking too many questions or complicated questions
- Stick to one idea at a time
- Give simple questions – instead of asking what would like for dinner, ask would you like chicken or beef for dinner tonight?
- Questions with yes/no answers are easier for them to answer

What to do if they have difficulty understanding

- Try saying it in a different way
- Keep the sentence simple and keep it short and then expand on the idea you are trying to convey
- Remember to laugh about misunderstandings and mistakes. Humor can help relieve tension and bring you closer together for that moment. (Be sure that they do not perceive as laughing at them)

Do's and Don'ts: Communicating with a Person Who Has Alzheimer's Disease

People with Alzheimer's may struggle to find the right word when speaking and may forget what they were saying. Remember to be patient. Here are some do's and don'ts to keep in mind.



Do	Don't
 Make eye contact and use the person's name.	 Exclude the person from conversations.
 Listen and be open to the person's concerns.	 Speak with an angry or tense tone.
 Allow extra time for the person to respond.	 Talk about the person as if they are not there.
 Try using different words if the person doesn't understand what you say the first time.	 Interrupt or argue with the person.
 Ask yes or no questions: "Would you like some tea?" rather than "What would you like to drink?"	 Ask the person whether they remember something or someone.

To learn more about communication and behavior changes in Alzheimer's disease, visit www.nia.nih.gov/alzheimers-communication.



SIGNS OF CAREGIVER STRESS

How do you know your stress isn't well managed?

- Changes in sleep
- Noticing less patience
- Feeling irritable/easily annoyed
- Changes in appetite
- Decreased motivation
- Decreased energy
- Forgetfulness
- Difficulty concentrating

What can I do about it?

- Identify what is contributing to your stress

1. Too much to do/feeling overwhelmed or inadequate
2. Changes in patient's needs
3. Decrease in support

What can I do about it?

- **Identify what you can and cannot change**

1. Can tasks be broken down into smaller, more manageable steps?
2. Where could I use help? Identify pt tasks others can help to complete.
3. Where can I build in small breaks?

Even small changes can help make a difference

- take a 5-10 min walk
- systematic breathing/relaxation
- call a friend
- listen to music

Who else can help?

1. Family members, neighbors, friends, community/church members
2. Be careful to avoid minimizing your need for help and turning down offers for additional support. If someone offers help and you aren't sure if their skills match your needs, thank them and exchange contact info. Suggest they call you in a week or two to check in with you – could be helpful for you to simply talk to this person, or maybe you've come up with ways they can help the person
3. Acknowledge where/how others can help you and invite help.

Self-care

- Caring for yourself will make you a better CG, look for ways to reduce stress
- How do you define self-care?
- What are you already doing?
- What else could help?
- What are barriers to self-care?

Suggestions

- **TAKE A BREAK WHEN YOU NEED IT** – can someone/a family member step in for a few hours? Can an aide be hired? Respite stay?
- **Be active** – go for a walk, play in garden, engage with pets
- **Prioritize sleep** - try to go to bed at the same time consistently. Avoid using your bed as a place to lounge.
- **Designate a time to relax** – deliberately schedule time for you and only you: read, watch tv, take a bath
- **Keep up on your own medical needs** – Caregivers are less likely than non-caregivers to practice preventative health and self-care*. Family CG are at an increased risk for depression and excessive use of alcohol and tobacco. Are you up to date with your medical care? How well are you managing your health/health conditions?
- **BE KIND TO YOURSELF** -You are doing the best you can, and you are not alone. Give yourself credit for all you are doing. Know that feeling frustrated, sad, overwhelmed, and/or guilty are common and understandable!
- **Try journaling** – writing out some thoughts and feelings can help lessen their intensity.
- **Express your creativity** – paint/draw, sing, dance, play

Additional Resources

- **The National Family Caregiver Support Program** – provides grants to states and territories to fund various supports that help family and informal CG care for older adults in their homes for as long as possible. Grant examples include individual counseling, support groups organization, caregiver training, and respite care.
- **The Administration for Community Living** offers a free elder care locator that helps people who need assistance with state and local agencies on aging and community-based organizations that help older adults.
- **Next Step in Care** provides information and resources for family caregivers as they assist loved ones in making transitions between various care settings
- **National Alliance for Caregiving, Family Caregiver Alliance, and the Caregiver Action Network** offer information and resources to support informal caregivers
- **Missoula Aging Services** – Online support groups for persons with dementia as well as groups for CG



Challenges Confronting Caregivers

Dementia

Trends

- U.S. – 5.8 million people with Alzheimer's and related Dementia diseases
- By 2060, the number of Alzheimer's cases is projected to rise to 14 million people
- In 2020- an estimated 300 people in **Carbon County** over the age of 65 had Alzheimer's disease which is about 10% of the total population. This number does not include other types of dementia

Needs of People with Alzheimer's

- Physical Environment-simple, not cluttered
- Routine- follow the same routine daily
- Activities-at their level of mental and physical function (can change quickly and vary daily)
- Safety within the home-falls, trip hazards, wandering, stoves

24/7 Care & Supervision



- ❑ Private Caregivers- Only one private caregiver agency in Carbon county that employs 1-4 caregivers

- ❑ Memory Care-(A separate unit within assisted living facilities)
 - ❖ Costs approximately 6,000-9,000 a month
 - ❖ Medicare does NOT pay for Assisted Living or Memory Care
 - ❖ Medicaid does pay BUT only if the individual has \$2,000 or less in assets. Currently it takes about 1 year to receive Medicaid funding
 - Not all assisted living facilities accept Medicaid funding and if they do, they only have a limited number of beds

- ❑ Nursing Homes
 - ❖ Costs approximately 9,000-12,000 a month
 - ❖ Medicare does NOT pay for Nursing Home placement
 - ❖ Medicaid does pay BUT only if the individual has \$2,000 or less in assets. Currently it takes about 3 months to 1 year to receive Medicaid funding

Respite for Caregivers

- ❑ **Respite**- a placement outside of their home for several days or weeks to provide a break for caregivers and their loved ones
- ❑ Medicare nor most insurance companies do NOT pay for respite
- ❑ Private pay
- ❑ Assisted Livings who provide respite care
 - ❖ Hygate Senior Living Assisted Living (2 month minimum stay)
 - ❖ Morning Star Assisted Living (21 days minimum stay)

Other Caregiver Resources

- ❑ Joliet Senior Services 406-962-3800 – assists in Medicaid applications or renewal. Has a limited number of caregivers who can assist with grocery shopping, etc. (Based on low income)

- ❑ Medicaid also provides funding for in home caregiving a few hours a week however, there is a long waiting list and oftentimes there are no caregivers in the area.
 - ❖ Families who qualify often hire their own caregiver (family or friend) and Medicaid will pay them

- ❑ Most caregivers rely on other family members or friends

Other Caregiver Resources (cont.)

- CART- Carbon County Transportation 406 -426-4506
- Meals on Wheels- 406-446-1826
- Community Care- Check in's and transportation to and from hospital and Billings
- Red Lodge Community Foundation – senior services- funding for limited carpenter services (ie ramps and railings) 406-446-2820
- Red Food Bank 406-446-1255
- LIFTT - income based – limited remodeling of homes and a variety of other services for people with disabilities 406-2595181
- HRDC- income based- provide a variety of services including assistance with heating costs, including windows etc. 406-247-4732

Be Prepared for the Future!

Medical Power of Attorney

Individuals state what their wishes are for any medical interventions and appoint a representative who they trust when the individual is incompetent to make medical decisions for themselves

Power of Attorney

Individuals appoint a representative who they trust to manage their financial affairs when they are incompetent to make financial decisions on their behalf

Wills and Trusts

Trusts provide a way of avoiding probate court which is expensive and time consuming

Wills take effect after the person dies. Trusts take effect as soon as they are signed

Wills become public record, trusts typically do not

References

- [Family Caregivers in Montana Provide \\$1.76 Billion in Unpaid Care to Loved Ones \(aarp.org\)](#)
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- [Caregiver Stress | Alzheimer's Association](#)
- PAN Foundation: The importance of caregiver support for the health and well-being of older adults
- NIH National Institute on Aging, 10/2023: Taking Care of Yourself: Tips for Caregivers
- Journal of Pain and Symptom Management: The Carer Support Needs Assessment Tool for Use in Palliative and End-of-Life Care at Home: A Validation Study, 9/2013: Ewing, Brundle, Payne, Grande, National Association for Hospice at Home