



# Family Caregivers of British Columbia

by Cari Taylor  
Manager - Programs

## Stress & Family Caregiving

# Who We Are?

- 27 years
- Registered Charity
- 1-1 Support  
(toll free 1.877.520.3267)
- Education - 4
- Help Navigating
- A voice



**Family Caregivers  
of British Columbia**

[www.familycaregiversbc.ca](http://www.familycaregiversbc.ca)



# A Family Caregiver is.....

.....anyone who gives care  
to an adult family member or friend.

& the care recipient can live:

- in own home
- with caregiver
- care facility.



# Who needs care?

- adult with an ABI
- 30-year old wife with MS
- Husband injured in a car accident
- Sister with breast cancer
- Adult disabled child
- Aunty with dementia
- Aging neighbor, elder, parent, friend
- Or .....

# Stress & Family Caregiving



Family Caregivers  
of British Columbia

# What is Stress?

- Body and mind's reaction to *everyday* tensions, changes and pressures.
- Unavoidable

# What is Stress?

- Stress can be both negative and positive
- How we *think about* an event or
- How we *think about* another person is what makes them stressful.

# What is Stress?

- Too little stress may cause boredom, a lack of excitement
- Impossible to measure - varies with each individual
- Fast pace, changing world.

# What is Stress?

- The body can handle stress for short periods of time
- Too much stress results in illness, heart disease, depression, and anxiety
- *Holmes-Rahe Stress Scale*  
(tests stress levels as a predictor of illness)
- CMHA.ca - Stress test

# Signs & Symptoms of Stress

- Tiredness/fatigue
- Anxiety
- Upset stomach
- Sleeplessness
- Appetite changes
- Headache
- light headedness



# More Signs & Symptoms of Stress



- Muscle tension or pain
- Irritability/anger
- Nervousness/trembling
- Cold, sweaty hands
- Grinding teeth  
clenching jaws
- Back pain

# 10 Signs of Caregiver Stress

1. Denial – about disease & effect
2. Anger
3. Withdrawing Socially
4. Anxiety – about the future
5. Depression
6. Exhaustion
7. Sleeplessness
8. Emotional reactions – crying & yelling
9. Lack of concentration
10. Health Problems

**The strongest predictor of  
caregiver distress.....**

**is the number of hours  
they care for someone.**

# Physical Changes due to Stress

- Blood pressure – increase/high
- Heart rate – faster
- Respiration – increase breathing
- Muscle tension – increase
- Blood sugar – levels rise
- Mental alertness – headaches/fatigue

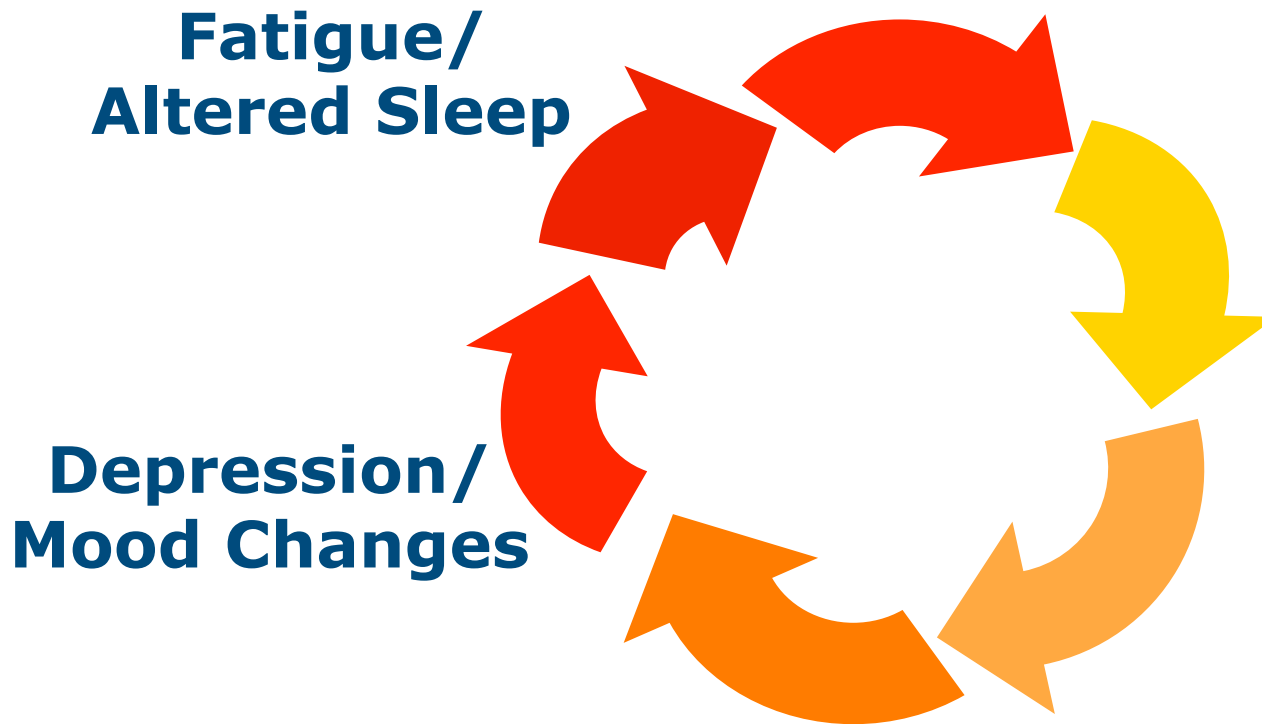
# The Pain Cycle

**Disease Pain**

**Tense Muscles/  
Functional  
Impairment**

**Stress**

**Fear / Anger / Frustration**



# Physical Effects of Stress:

**Fight**  
**OR**  
**Flight**



# Side Effects

- ✓ Stress drains the body of energy
- ✓ loss of sleep
- ✓ agitation
- ✓ depression
- ✓ Increase in poor eating habits  
(want more comfort food)

# Emotional Changes

Emotional reactions vary:

More anger, fear, anxiety, helplessness, loss of control, annoyance, or frustration.

Harder to predict than physical reaction

Small amounts of stress may help you perform at your best

# Are YOU Vulnerable to Stress?

- Identify causes of your stress



- list what *can* be changed  
and  
what *cannot* be changed

- Keep a stress diary
- To Do lists



- Adapt to your stress

# Relaxation:

An active process  
to calm your body and mind

- *Straw breathing*

- ✓ Progressive muscle relaxation
- ✓ Guided or Vivid Imagery
- ✓ Visualization-Biofeedback
- ✓ Distraction



- **Take time  
for you!**



**RESPITE**



# Consider a few changes to.....

Healthy Eating  
Stable relationships  
Better or More talks  
Having some fun  
Social support & Pets  
Counselling



Self Care Changes DO  
Increase your resistance to stress.

# Physical Activity

- Shown to relieve stress!  
and improve sleep!



# Self Talk:



- Watch for and alter repeating negative messages
- Catch and change “Shoulds” (shoulda, coulda, woulda)
- Use positive statements



# A FEW Final Thoughts.....



# 10 Ways to Reduce Caregiver Stress

1. Learn about disease or condition & changes
2. Be realistic about disease progression
3. Be realistic about yourself
4. Accept your feelings
5. Share with others
6. Be positive
7. Find the humor
8. Take care of You!
9. Get help
10. Plan for the future

**To Experience  
a SUDDEN decrease in stress –  
focus on one thing at a time  
instead of trying to solve  
everything at once.  
& just do that one thing.**

**Gudjon Bergmann**

# Ways To Say “No” (Nicely!)

Say ‘no’ and then say what you can do.....

- I won’t be able to take you shopping today, but I’ll check with Bob to see if he might be free.

• Not this time: (You are willing, just not now)

- I’d love to come over for a visit with you, but I’m swamped with the kids’ activities. How about some other time?”

**Learn YOUR body's  
signals of stress**

**Learn to identify  
what causes  
YOU stress**

- *Your NEEDS*  
*trump*  
*your care recipient's WANTS*



**Small Steps  
CAN  
lead  
to  
major  
life  
changes**

*You may well be  
the most important person  
in someone's life*

**So we all need to look after YOU!**

# Questions?



Family Caregivers  
of British Columbia



## Thank YOU For Attending!