

Stress Management and Self-Care for Caregivers

Adapted from: Home Health Aide Guidelines for Care © 2008

Stress

- Can be Acute or Chronic
- Comes from demands and pressures
- Symptoms include headaches, muscular tension, stomach problems, anger, depression, anxiety
- Stress is identifiable and manageable
- If not addressed, long term (or chronic) stress can lead to hypertension (high blood pressure), and heart disease

Balance under Pressure

- Recognize that coworkers have stressful, busy lives, and varying roles (spouse, parent, caregiver etc.)
- It is important to incorporate effective stress management to maintain a balanced, successful life
- It is critical to accept that stress does and always will exist, and that not all stress is bad
- Universal job stressors include increased workload, conflicts with coworkers, high client demands etc.

Home Health Consideration

- Everyone's stressors are different, but can include:
 - Demanding Clients
 - Upset or uncooperative families
 - Transportation to and from work
 - Concern for personal safety
 - Bad weather or other unforeseen events
 - Caring for clients who can't communicate their needs effectively
 - Clients who are higher functioning and want to perform their own cares
 - Other individual stressors: need to be identified before they can be addressed

Balancing Emotional Needs and Job Responsibilities

- Positive adaptations can reduce stress
 - Take a short break, take 10 deep breaths, take a vacation, listen to music, meditate, practice a hobby, get 30-60 minutes of daily exercise, get a massage, see a funny movie
 - Remember “stressed” spelled backwards is “desserts”! ☺
 - It is important to remember that stress will not manage itself, you must take steps to reduce and maintain your stress level

Supporting Self (and others, too)

- Develop and maintain a “can-do” attitude
- Consider/address the problems you *can* solve, don’t dwell on things you can’t change or have no control over
- Make an effort to be more assertive; a confident attitude can reduce personal conflicts
- Communicate effectively: don’t blame, stay calm, be direct, have respect
- Break down seemingly overwhelming tasks into smaller, more manageable steps.
- Just getting started on a task can reduce its stressfulness

Know Yourself Better Your Health

- Learn what you must do-through practice-to lower your stress levels
- Ask your supervisor for assistance when you need it- having someone to talk to, or just getting a chance to share your experience can greatly change your outlook
- Know that your efforts to care for clients are extremely important and highly valued by the clients, their families, and your team members-even if it doesn't feel that way all the time
- Value and acknowledge the "thank-you" from clients, families, supervisors. Sometimes, just a smile can change someone's day, so give and receive-it will make everyone have a more positive, less stressed day