Finding the Humor in Caregiving!

Learning How to Laugh!
The Tears Will Take Care of Themselves!
Why do we care about you?

• Dementia caregiving is very HARD WORK!
• Over 40% of the time we will lose a caregiver before we lose the person with dementia
• Your emotional state affects the person you are caring for
• You are just as important as the person with dementia
Step #1

• **Become Aware of Yourself**
  - What is most *important* to you? Top priorities...
  - What is necessary for you to keep going?
    • How much sleep?
    • Physical health issues?
    • Breaks?
    • $$$$?
    • Time to meet other demands?
    • Someone to listen?
  - What is necessary for you to THRIVE?
Step #2

• Think & Remember…

When was the last time you felt really good?
- What were you doing?
- Where were you?
- Were you with someone? Who?
- What made it great?
- How did you feel?
Step #3

• *Think and Remember*...

• When have you been really miserable?
  - What were you doing?
  - Where were you?
  - Was anyone with you?
  - What made it awful?
  - How did you get over it?
Step #4

• Where are you NOW?
How You Feel is REAL & Important!

• However you feel is OK, its how you feel!
• It’s not about judgment, its about support!
• Acknowledge the feelings...
• Then decide what to do about it...
• Is it what you want to feel?
• IF YES, go with it...
• If NO, work to change it!
If You are having a HARD TIME...

- Think about...
  - What HELPS YOU
  - What you NEED
  - What is MISSING
  - What you are struggling with
  - Who else might help
  - What will happen if you don’t do something
  - What might happen if you do...
Some Ideas for changing...

- Pick one thing
- Plan on baby steps
- Get support for you
- Build a routine
- Check in on your feelings
- Add something before giving something up
- Believe it - Not everyone is meant to do hands on care
- Give it a try... not permanent... just try
A Few More Ideas

• Set aside a few minutes - use a timer!
• Breathe
• Smile ... Laugh! - look for some funnies
• Remember a good time
• What do you get out of the relationship
• Use at least one of the STRESS TAMERS
10 Minute Stress Tamers

• *Sit quietly* in calm surroundings with soft lights and pleasant scents.
• *Aromatherapy* - lavender, citrus, vanilla, cinnamon, peppermint, fresh cut grass.
• *Breathe deeply* - rest your mind & oxygenate
• *Soak* - in a warm bath, or just your hands or feet
• *Read* - Spiritual readings, poetry, inspirational readings, or one chapter of what you like...
• *Laugh and smile* - Watch classic comedians, Candid Camera, America’s Funniest Home Videos, look at kid or animal photos...
• *Stretch* - front to back, side to side, & across
• *Garden* - work with plants
10 Minute Stress Tamers

- **Beanbag heat therapy.** Fill a sock with dry beans and sew or tie closed. Heat bag and beans in a microwave for 30 seconds at a time. Place on tight muscles and massage gently; relax for ten minutes.

- **Remember the good times** - Record oral memories - scrapbooks, photo journals, keepsake memory picture frames. Just jot!

- Do a little on a favorite **hobby**.

- Have a **cup of decaffeinated tea or coffee**

- Play a **brain game** - crosswords, jigsaws, jeopardy, jumbles...

- Look through the **hymnal** and find a favorite - hum it all the way through...
10 Minute Stress Tamers

- **Books on Tape** - Rest your eyes and read
- **Soothing sounds** -
  - Music you love
  - Music especially for stress relief
  - Recorded sounds of nature
- **Listen to coached relaxation recordings**
- **Pamper Yourself** - think of what you LOVE and give yourself permission to do it for 10 minutes
- **Neck rubs or back rubs** - use the 'just right' pressure
- **Hand Massages** - with lotion or without - its up to you...
10 Minute Stress Tamers

• *Take a walk.*
• *Sit* in the sun.
• *Rock* on the porch.
• *Pray* or read a passage from scripture
• *Journal* - Take the opportunity to “tell it like it is.”
• Cuddle and stroke a *pet*.
• Have that cup of coffee or tea with a *special friend* who listens well.
• Pay attention to *your personality.*
  - If you rejuvenate being alone, then *seek solitude.*
  - If you rejuvenate by being with others, *seek company.*
BREATHE!!!

• Take a deep breath in
• BLOW it all the way out
• Take another breath in
• BLOW it out
• Take one final breath in AND
• SING IT OUT....

• Feel what happened to you...
• Look at what happened to the people around you...
• Think about how and when you might do this...
Let Go:

- How it “used to be”
- How it “should be”
- How you “should be”
Identify

• What you’re good at...and what you’re not

• Who can help...and how they can help

• What really matters
Positron Emission Tomography (PET)
Alzheimer’s Disease Progression vs. Normal Brains

Normal   Early Alzheimer’s   Late Alzheimer’s   Child

G. Small, UCLA School of Medicine.
Normal Brain

Alzheimer's Brain
Learning & Memory Center
Hippocampus
BIG CHANGE
Understanding Language – BIG CHANGE
Hearing Sound – Not Changed
Sensory Strip
Motor Strip
White Matter
Connections
BIG CHANGES

Formal Speech &
Language Center
HUGE CHANGES

Automatic Speech
Rhythm – Music
Expletives
PRESERVED
Executive Control Center
Emotions
Behavior
Judgment
Reasoning
Vision Center – BIG CHANGES
What is There is Laugh About?

- What the person says
- What the person does
- What the person says VERSUS what is done
- Your mistakes and OOPS
- Your moments of joy
- Your moments of insight
- Their moments of insight... awareness... or humor
- Other people and their behaviors or words
- Things you see, hear, read...
Why?

• Laughter is healthy
• Laughter connects you to others
• Laughter makes your brain work better
• Laughter makes you learn faster
• Laughter energizes you
• Laughter refocuses your thoughts
• Laughter relieves stress and worry
• Laughter heals
Why Do We Laugh?

• Four Theories
  - Superiority Theory
  - Relief Theory
  - Incongruity Theory
  - Play Theory
Some Types of Humor

• Funny stories
• Funny comments
• Jokes
• Professional humor – topic specific humor
• Puns or word play
• Cartoons (TV)
• Riddles
• Mimicry

• Slapstick
• Self-deprecation
• Sarcastic
• Dry or Wry
• Caricature
• Photos or pictures
• Video clips
• Comics (Papers)
• Tongue twisters
Why Do We Laugh?

• Something Seems 'Funny' to US!
  - What we see
  - What we hear
  - What we experience
  - What we see compared to what we hear
  - What we see compared to our experiences
  - What we experience compared to what we expected
  - What other people say, do, say versus do...
Finding the Right Humor for You

• Your sense of humor may stay the same
• Your sense of humor may change
• Your ability to understand humor will change
• 'Silly' or 'stupid' may become 'funny' as your brain changes
Humor for you...

• 'Funny' may become NOT!
• It may take LONGER to 'get it' - slow down
• Familiar stories and jokes may become more FUN than those you don’t already know
• You may want more VISUAL humor versus written or spoken humor
Laughter BREEDS Laughter

• Hang out with HAPPY people
• Decide to look on the bright side for RIGHT NOW
• Think about what might be funny about this...
• Expose yourself to FUNNY
• Try some different resources and types
• Work your way up... from a smile to belly laugh
Put Humor In Your Day

• Make Time for Having Fun
• Make Time to Laugh Some
• Smile at Someone
• Smile at Yourself in the Mirror
• ESPECIALLY when you are having a HARD TIME
  - STOP
  - Take a Break
  - Laugh
  - Try Again
Here are some ideas...
History According to Kids

- Ancient Egypt was old. It was inhabited by gypsies and mummies who all wrote in hydraulics. They lived in the Sarah Dessert. The climate Of the Sarah is such that all the inhabitants have to live elsewhere.

- Solomon had three hundred wives and seven hundred porcupines. He was an actual hysterical figure as well as being in the bible. It sounds like he was sort of busy too.
• Socrates was a famous old Greek teacher who went around giving people advice. They killed him. He later died from an overdose of wedlock which is apparently poisonous. After his death, his career suffered a dramatic decline.

• In the first Olympic games, Greeks ran races, jumped, hurled biscuits, and threw the java. The games were messier then than they show on TV now.

• Madman Curie discovered radio. She was the first woman to do what she did. Other women have become scientists since her but they didn't get to find radios because they were already taken.
• Sir Francis Drake circumcised the world with a 100 foot clipper which was very dangerous to all his men.

• Johann Bach wrote a great many musical compositions and had a large number of children. In between he practiced on an old spinster which he kept up in his attic. Bach died from 1750 to the present. Bach was the most famous composer in the world and so was Handel. Handel was half German, half Italian, and half English. He was very large.
I think there’s a spy among us...
What Do You Want Them To Say?

• 3 friends die in a car accident and they go to an orientation in heaven. They are all asked, "When you are in your casket and friends and family are talking about you, what would you like them to say?

The first guy says, "I would like to hear them say that I was a great doctor of my time, and a great family man."

The second guy says, "I would like to hear that I was a wonderful husband and school teacher which made a huge difference in our children of tomorrow."

The last guy replies, "I would like to hear them say ... Look, He's Moving!"
Men and Anniversaries

• A woman awakes during the night to find that her husband was not in their bed. She puts on her robe and goes downstairs to look for him. She finds him sitting at the kitchen table with a hot cup of coffee in front of him. He appears to be in deep thought, just staring at the wall. She watches as he wipes a tear from his eye and takes a sip of his coffee.

• "What's the matter, dear?" she whispers as she steps into the room, "Why are you down here at this time of night?"

• The husband looks up from his coffee, "I am just remembering when we first met 20 years ago and started dating. You were only 16. Do you remember back then?" he says solemnly.
• The wife is touched to tears thinking that her husband is so caring, so sensitive. "Yes, I do" she replies.

• The husband pauses. The words were not coming easily. "Do you remember when your father caught us in the back seat of my car?"

• "Yes, I remember," said the wife, lowering herself into a chair beside him.

• The husband continues. "Do you remember when he shoved the shotgun in my face and said, "Either you marry my daughter, or I will send you to jail for 20 years?" "I remember that too" she replies softly.

• He wipes another tear from his cheek and says. . . . . . . . . . . "I would have gotten out today."
Even this...

- With all the sadness and trauma going on in the world at the moment, it is worth reflecting on the death of a very important person, which almost went unnoticed last week.
- Larry LaPrise, the man who wrote "The Hokey Pokey," died peacefully at age 93.
- The most traumatic part for his family was getting him into the coffin.
- They put his left leg in.... And then the trouble started.
Now – for an EXPERIENCE

Let’s Have some Fun!
Take Out Your Balloon

Put all the bad stuff in

Get it out of your lungs, your head, your heart, your spirit...
NOW....

Let it go....

And SMILE!
Playmate
Hey, hey, hey playmate
Come out and play with me
And bring your dollies three
Climb up my apple tree
Call down my rain barrel
Slide down my cellar door
And we'll be jolly friends forever more.
She couldn’t come out and play,
It was a sunny day
With tearful eyes she heaved a sigh
And I could hear her say
I’m sorry playmate,
I can not play with you
My dolly has the flu
Boo-hoo, boo-hoo, boo-hoo
Ain’t got no rain barrel,
Ain’t got no cellar door,
But we’ll be jolly friends, forever more.
“It beats a cold creek!”

Courtesy of Life Enrichment Center, Kings Mtn