



# The Conscious Caregiver

Presented by:

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# Introduction

- Born in Hong Kong
- Bachelor Degree in Psychology (CUHK)
- MA Degree in Educational Psychology (University of Minnesota)
- Registered Psychotherapist since 2013
- Founder of Positive Minds Psychotherapy Services since 2017





# Agenda

- ♦ Check-in
- ♦ Caregiver Roles
- ♦ Caregiver Stress and Burnout
- ♦ Conscious Caregiving & Self-care
- ♦ Conscious Communication with Your Loved One
- ♦ Conscious Caregiving Near The End of Life
- ♦ Lessons to Learn
- ♦ A Tribute to Family Caregivers
- ♦ Q& A

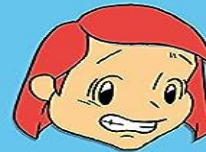


# Check-in

## How Are You Feeling Today?



HAPPY



AFRAID



SAD



FRUSTRATED



ANGRY



SMUG



DISGUSTED



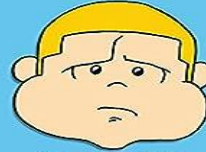
CONFUSED



SURPRISED



GUILTY



LONELY



DEPRESSED



ECSTATIC



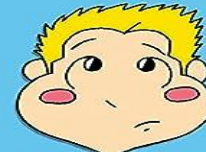
HOPEFUL



WORRIED



ASHAMED



EMBARRASSED



JEALOUS



DISTRACTED



HOPELESS



EMPTY



CONFIDENT



NERVOUS



ENRAGED



EXHAUSTED



CAUTIOUS



PROUD



SHOCKED



OVERWHELMED



SHY

# Self-Assessment:

## Depression Anxiety Stress Scale-21 (DASS21)

Please read each statement and circle a number 0, 1, 2 or 3 which indicates how much the statement applied to you over the past week.

There are no right or wrong answers. Do not spend too much time on any statement.

The rating scale is as follows:

- 0 Did not apply to me at all
- 1 Applied to me to some degree, or some of the time
- 2 Applied to me to a considerable degree, or a good part of time
- 3 Applied to me very much, or most of the time

Online version:

<https://www.healthfocuspsychology.com.au/tools/dass-21/>

# DASS-21 Scoring (not a measure of clinical diagnoses)

Stress Level: score =  $(Q1+6+8+11+12+14+18) \times 2$

Depression Level: score =  $(Q3+5+10+13+16+17+21) \times 2$

Anxiety Level: score =  $(Q2+4+7+9+15+19+20) \times 2$

	Depression	Anxiety	Stress
Normal	0-9	0-7	0-14
Mild	10-13	8-9	15-18
Moderate	14-20	10-14	19-25
Severe	21-27	15-19	26-33
Extremely Severe	28+	20+	34





“There are only four kinds of people in the world: those who have been caregivers, those who are currently caregivers, those who will be caregivers, and those who will need caregivers.”

--Rosalynn Carter, First lady of the US and president of the Rosalynn Carter Institute for Caregiving

# Family caregivers wear many hats:

- Nurse
- Companion
- Physical therapist
- Cook
- Housekeeper
- Bander
- Financial planner
- Medical liaison
- Personal assistant (bathing, grooming, toileting)
- Social director
- Roommates for all or part of your caregiving journey
- Other roles – parent, worker, friend, community members
- -> Can happen overnight due to a sudden health change/it might creep up on you slowly





# What is Conscious Caregiving?

- Conscious caregivers choose to allot time, energy, and compassion to themselves as well as their care recipients.
- Conscious caregivers use mindfulness techniques to pause, notice exactly what is happening around them, and then respond in a way that is a win-win for both them and their loved one.
- ❖ Conscious caregivers care their loved one **WITHOUT LOSING THEMSELVES.**



# Understanding Your Emotions



## Caregiving Guilt

Guilt that you are not doing a good enough job.



## Resentment

You might feel caregiving is a burden, but chances are you don't really dislike your loved one.



## Fear of the Future

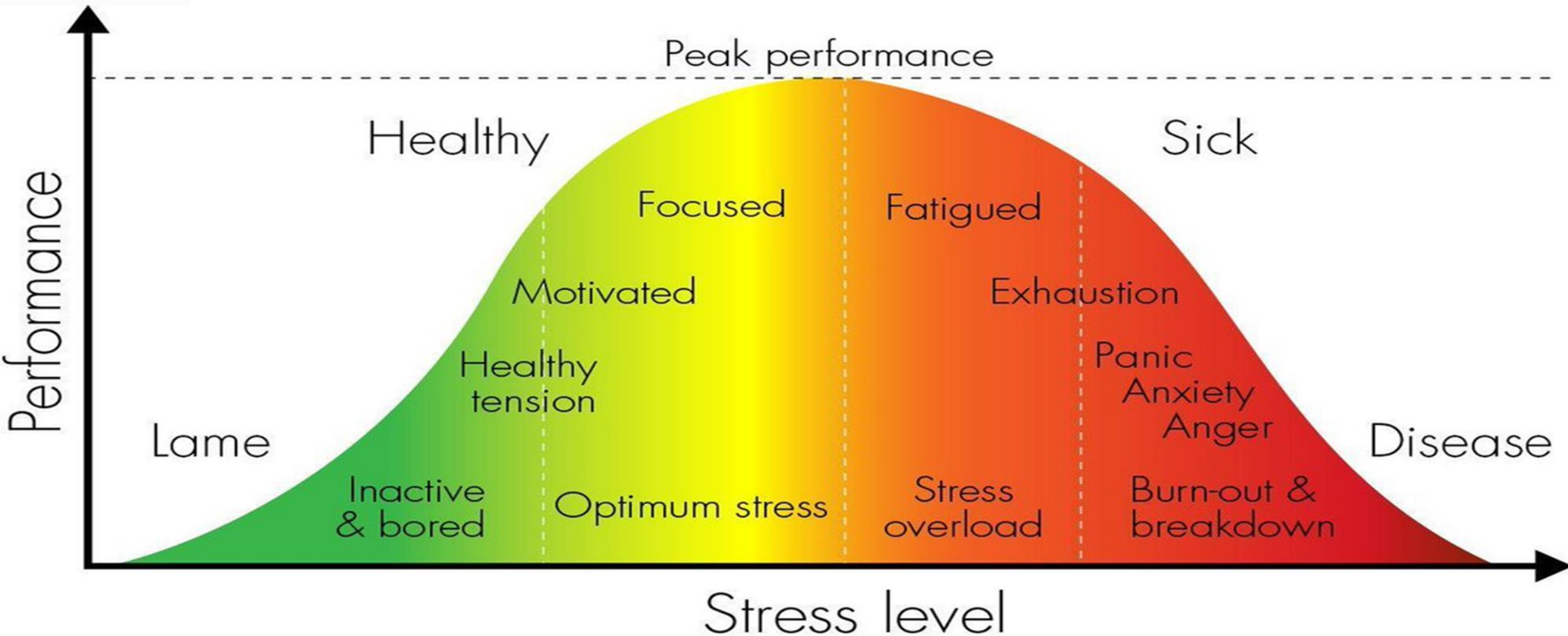
You worry about what the future will be like for yourself & your loved one.



## Grief/ Anticipatory Grief

You are grieving the loss of the loved one once was.

# The Yerkes-Dodson Law: The Relationship between Stress and Performance





# WINDOW OF TOLERANCE

The window of tolerance and different states that affect you



## HYPERAROUSAL

- Abnormal state of increased responsiveness
- Feeling anxious, angry and out of control
- You may experience wanting to fight or run away



## DYSREGULATION

- When you start to deviate outside your window of tolerance you start to feel agitated, anxious, or angry
- You do not feel comfortable but you are not out of control yet

## SHRINK your Window of Tolerance

Stress and trauma  
can cause your  
window of  
tolerance to  
shrink

Think of the window of tolerance as a river and you're floating down it. When the river narrows, it's fast and unsafe. When it widens, it slows down and you:

- are at a balanced and calm state of mind
- feel relaxed and in control
- are able to function most effectively
- are able to take on any challenge life throws at you

## WINDOW OF TOLERANCE

Meditation,  
listening to music,  
or engaging in  
hobbies can  
expand your  
window of  
tolerance

## EXPAND your Window of Tolerance



## DYSREGULATION

- You start to feel overwhelmed, your body might start shutting down and you could lose track of time
- You don't feel comfortable but you are not out of control yet



## HYPOAROUSAL

- Abnormal state of decreased responsiveness
- Feeling emotional numbness, exhaustion, and depression
- You may experience your body shutting down or freeze

# How to Avoid Caregiver Burnout?

- ♦ Accept Help (You can do anything, but not everything.)
- ♦ Learn to Delegate
- ♦ Use Respite Care (add care at home, use adult day services, use respite care in an eldercare facility)
- ♦ Take Time off from Work
- ♦ Join a Support Group
- ♦ Get Organized (make lists, research local support services, research other caregiving options ahead of time )
- ♦ Be Kind to Yourself
- ♦ Lower Your Expectations
- ♦ Don't Compare



# What if I Explode at My Loved One?



- ♦ Identify Your Feelings (check-in)
- ♦ Respite Options
- ♦ Change Your Mode of Contact
- ♦ Support Group
- ♦ Role Play with Others for Solutions
- ♦ Repair the Hurt - in a genuinely positive frame of mind; sincerely apologize for your part
- ♦ Self-compassion: the best family caregivers can blow their top sometimes ->You are human and not perfect.
- ♦ Growth mindset – keep learning



# TIPP

T emperature

I ntense Exercise

P aced Breathing

P rogressive Muscle Relaxation

# Temperature

Change the temperature of your body



# Intense Exercise

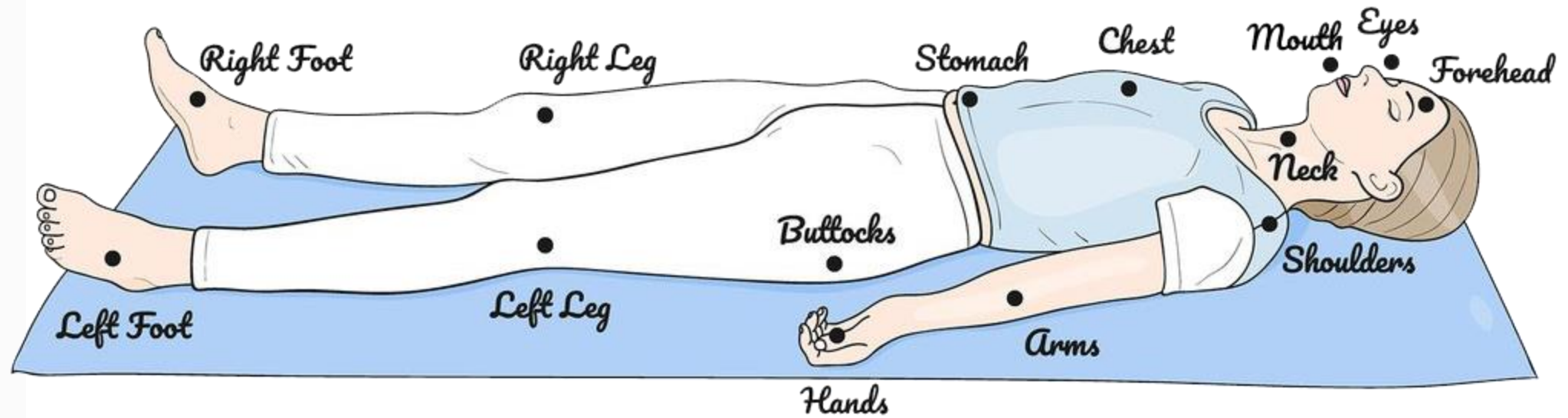




# Paced Breathing



# Progressive Muscle Relaxation







# What is Conscious Caregiving & Self-Care?

- Self-Care is any action that you intentionally take to improve your mental, physical, or emotional health.
- Conscious caregiving begin by practicing mindfulness, or self-awareness in the present moment without judging yourself & others.
- Stop whatever actions you're engaged in, pause, and pay attention, taking in your immediate surroundings through your senses.
- Don't criticize, praise, or label what you observe. Then, carefully decide if there are thoughts or actions you can change in order to create an improved situation for you and/or your loved one.
- It **goes against your instincts** and puts yourself first.



# Self-Care Benefits

- ♦ Improves Physical Health
- ♦ Improves Sleep Patterns
- ♦ Reduces and Relieves Stress
- ♦ Lowers Levels of Guilt, Anxiety, & Sadness
- ♦ Improves Self-Esteem
- ♦ Makes You & Your Care Recipient Happy



# How to Practice Self-Care?

- Create & Use your Happiness L.I.S.T.  
(L= Likes; I=Interests; S.T.=Satisfying Things that bring you fulfillment)
  - Use Meditation
  - Listen to Music
  - Vent/ Express – verbally or in writing
  - Use Time Effectively (create a master to-do-list)
  - Stay Healthy
  - Eat Healthy
  - Get Some Sleep
  - Get Active
  - Stay on Top of Your Medical Issues
  - Pamper Yourself
  - Add a Dose of Laughter
  - Create Positive Self-Affirmation
  - Practice Self-Compassion
- “A good laugh & a long sleep are the two best cures for anything.” Iris Proverb*



# Practical Strategies:

## Overcome Common Barriers:

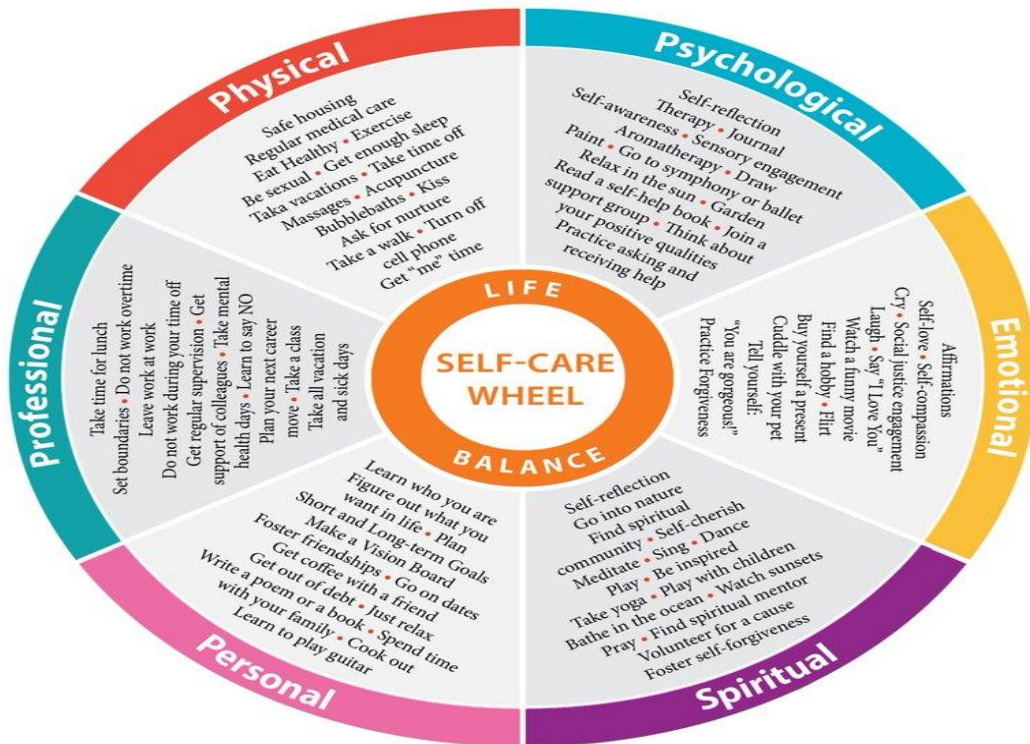
- ♦ Lack of Resources – Search & Ask
- ♦ Lack of Support/ Confidence – lower expectations
- ♦ Hard to Relax – Practice
- ♦ Forgetfulness – Use Reminders
- ♦ No Awareness – Mindfulness/ Check-in
- ♦ Procrastination/ Perfect Timing – Just Do It
- ♦ Pessimistic Thinking (selfish, don't work) – Experiment

## Creative & Gradual Ways:

- ♦ Start with 5 minutes a day
- ➔ 5 minutes several times throughout the day
- ➔ do it once during the day for a longer period of time
- ➔ Grow into daily habits
- ♦ Habit Stacking
- ♦ Notice -> Go
- ♦ No judgement

# Self-care activities -> help boost your mood 😊

## SELF-CARE WHEEL



This Self-Care Wheel was inspired by and adapted from "Self-Care Assessment Worksheet" from *Transforming the Pain: A Workbook on Vicarious Traumatization* by Saakvitne, Pearlman & Staff of TSI/CAAP (Norton, 1996). Created by Olga Phoenix Project: Healing for Social Change (2013). Dedicated to all trauma professionals worldwide. Copyright @ 2013 Olga Phoenix, All Rights Reserved.

[www.OlgaPhoenix.com](http://www.OlgaPhoenix.com)

## Happiness Chemicals and how to hack them ☀️

### DOPAMINE THE REWARD CHEMICAL

- Completing a task
- Doing self-care activities
- Eating food
- Celebrating little wins



### SEROTONIN THE MOOD STABILIZER

- Meditating
- Running
- Sun exposure
- Walk in nature
- Swimming
- Cycling



### OXYTOCIN THE LOVE HORMONE

- Playing with a dog
- Playing with a baby
- Holding hand
- Hugging your family
- Give compliment



### ENDORPHIN THE PAIN KILLER

- Laughter exercise
- Essential oils
- Watch a comedy
- Dark chocolate
- Exercising



# Conscious Communication with the Loved One

## Mindful Communication include:

- ♦ Mindful Listening
- ♦ Mindful Speaking
- ♦ Mindful Nonverbal Communication

(body language, tone of voice, your loved one's nonverbal communication)

*“The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.”*

–William H. Whyte American urbanist

## Addressing Difficult Communication:

- ♦ Consider Your Emotional Response
- ♦ Let Your Loved one Participate
- ♦ Set Realistic Goals
- ♦ Do Your Research
- ♦ Keep Time in Mind
- ♦ Choose an Appropriate Location
- ♦ Don't Avoid Difficult Conversations

# Communicate with Loved Ones with Memory Loss

## Mindful Awareness:

- ♦ Give short, one-sentence explanations & allow plenty of time to process
- ♦ Repeat exactly the same way
- ♦ It is unkind to point out what they forgot
- ♦ Be flexible & reassuring to calm their FEAR
- ♦ Don't argue or insist that you're right (no right or wrong)
- ♦ Leave, take a break/ change the topic if needed; Resume when being calm
- ♦ Don't take what your loved one says personally (disease talking)
- ♦ Accept blame when your loved one says you've done something wrong

## Remember:

- ♦ A person with memory loss is not giving you a hard time; they are having a hard time

➔ Be GENEROUS & PATIENT

*“Kindness is the language which the deaf can hear & the blind can see.”*

- Mark Twain, American writer & humorist



# Conscious Caregiving Near the End of Life

## Things to Consider:



Understanding Anticipatory Grief



Addressing Difficult End-of Life Issues with Your Loved One



Seeking Hospice & Palliative Care



Saying Goodbye



# End of Life 101

## What does a “good death” mean to you?

- ♦ Where do you want to spend your final months, weeks, or days – at home, in a hospital, in a skilled nursing facility, in a hospice facility or in any other specific place?
- ♦ Do you want to use palliative and/or hospice services?
- ♦ Do you want to have clergy visits? If yes, when and where?
- ♦ Do you have any special family stories and/or life lessons you want to share, write or have recorded as a legacy for future generations?
- ♦ What kinds of medical treatments do you want or refuse to get?
- ♦ Do you have an executive will, trust, power of attorney for finances and health care in place?
- ♦ Are there any funeral or burial instructions you want to be carried out?
- ♦ Are there any unresolved matters in both prior and current relationships that you want to resolve?

# What Lessons Can You Learn?

## Self-knowledge:

- ♦ Your caregiving journey changes you forever.
- ♦ Your caregiver role doesn't simply turn off.
- ♦ They are not meant to make you feel guilty, anger, or sadness, but rather to help uncover the meaning behind your experiences.
- ♦ They are designed to direct your thinking toward your end-of life wishes and apply what you have learned to help new and current caregivers.

## Reminders:

- ♦ **Make yourself a priority** every day. Live, love, and laugh.
- ♦ Don't overlook any family caregiver you meet who might experience caregiver burnout.

# A Tribute to Caregivers

by Linda Abbit, the founder of Tender Loving Eldercare

- ♦ **C** is for **caring** more for others than for yourself.
- ♦ **A** is for **appreciating** that all human beings deserve dignity and respect.
- ♦ **R** is for **respite** time you take to refresh your body, mind, and soul.
- ♦ **E** is for **excellence** in all you do for your loved ones.
- ♦ **G** is for **going the extra mile** day in and day out.
- ♦ **I** is for **inventing** creative solutions for challenging situations.
- ♦ **V** is for **victory** over negative or self-defeating thoughts.
- ♦ **I** is for **inspiring** others to care more deeply about their loved ones.
- ♦ **N** is for **not giving up** under extremely challenging circumstances.
- ♦ **G** is for **gratitude** for the tender loving care you give to others every day.

The logo for National Family Caregivers Month is displayed on a light blue background. It features a stylized white leaf icon to the right of the word "NATIONAL". Below "NATIONAL" are the words "FAMILY CAREGIVERS" and "MONTH!" in a larger, bold, dark blue serif font. A horizontal band with a green and blue leaf pattern separates the text from the bottom of the logo.

NATIONAL  
FAMILY CAREGIVERS  
MONTH!



# Reference:

Abbit, L. (2017). *The Conscious Caregiver: A Mindful Approach to Caring for Your Loved One Without Losing Yourself*. Adams Media.



# THANK YOU For Being a Conscious Caregiver!

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