

CAREGIVER NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2020

Depression and Caregiving

Providing care for a loved one with Alzheimer's Disease or other Dementia often causes mental, emotional, physical, financial and/or social changes and stresses that can tremendously impact caregivers' lives throughout the course of the disease. Each one of these areas of change alone can be challenging to manage, and when impacted by two or more areas, they may find it difficult to cope. Feelings of sadness, worry, loneliness, anger, guilt, and being overwhelmed are extremely common for caregivers. The complexities of their loved one's care needs and the duration of that care increases the risk for depression. This edition provides some information about common symptoms, caregiver-specific concerns, and finding support and treatment when needed.

Symptoms of Depression

Caregivers often are so busy they don't recognize their own symptoms of depression. Sometimes their friends and family members are the ones that point the symptoms out to them. The following are common depression symptoms:



- Feelings of sadness, emptiness, tearfulness
- Decreased interest or pleasure in regular activities, socializing, and/or hobbies
- A marked increase or decrease in appetite and/or weight
- A change in sleeping patterns [sleeping too little or too much, waking up for no reason, difficulty getting to sleep, difficulty waking up, etc.]
- Feeling tired, fatigued, unmotivated, numb, or lacking energy
- Increased feelings of irritability, getting easily annoyed or frustrated, losing temper/yelling, agitation
- Anxiety, nervousness, excessive worry, feeling panicky
- Feelings of restlessness, or conversely, slowed thinking, speaking and/or body movements
- Problems thinking, making decisions, planning, remembering things, or concentrating; feeling like your head is in a fog
- Neglecting your physical care, appearance and/or well-being
- Increase in distracting or numbing activities i.e. excessive time on the internet, playing computer games, or watching t.v.
- Increase in alcohol, drug or pain killer use
- Feelings of worthlessness, hopelessness
- Thoughts of hurting yourself or others, death, suicide and/or homicide
- Increased or unusual physical pain or symptoms i.e. headaches, digestive problems, back pain

[continued on back]

*"When we love, we always
strive to become better than
we are. When we strive to
become better than we are,
everything around us
becomes better too."*

— Paulo Coelho,

The Alchemist



In This Issue

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Special Caregiver Concerns

The Family Caregiver Alliance [<https://www.caregiver.org>] published an exceptional article entitled *"Depression and Caregiving"* that is available for you to read and to further explore the following list of depression concerns that particularly impact caregivers. Please go to the website for a full explanation of each bullet point or contact Denise Kee-White at 818.708.6376 or dkeewhite@onegeneration.org to request a copy of the article be sent to you by mail or email.

- Caring for a person with dementia can be all consuming
- Women experience depression at a higher rate than men
- Men who are caregivers deal with depression differently
- Military and veteran caregivers are at risk of depression
- Lack of sleep contributes to depression
- Depression can persist after placement in a care facility

Often times feelings of depression are perceived as a sign of weakness or lack of willpower and caregivers may feel uncomfortable or embarrassed admitting feeling depressed. The truth is, depression is an illness just like diabetes or pneumonia. According to the Family Caregiver Alliance article *"Caregiver Depression: A Silent Health Crisis,"* almost 60% of California's Caregiver Resource Centers' clients showed clinical signs of depression. In addition, a "study found that 41% of former caregivers of a spouse with Alzheimer's disease or another form of dementia experienced mild to severe depression up to three years after their spouse had died."

"Caregiving does not cause depression, nor will everyone who provides care experience the negative feelings that go with depression. But in an effort to provide the best possible care for a family member or friend, caregivers often sacrifice their own physical and emotional needs, and the emotional and physical experiences involved with providing care can strain even the most capable person" and "can exact a heavy toll."

Treatment

If you have identified, or someone else observed you having, five or more of the symptoms indicated on the front page, the symptoms have been present for two weeks or longer, and they are a change from your previous level of functioning, then it is time to talk to an experienced professional. Make a list of the symptoms you are experiencing and note the length of time you've had them. You can use this list to refer to when you speak to your doctor and/or mental health professional. According to the *"Depression and Caregiving"* article, the "first step to getting the best treatment for depression is to meet with a mental health professional such as a psychologist, social worker, or other licensed therapist.

At the same time, schedule a physical exam with your doctor. Certain medications, as well as some medical conditions such as a viral infection, can cause the same symptoms as depression, and should be evaluated by a physician. The exam should include lab tests and an interview. Although a physician may prescribe antidepressant medication, medication alone is not the most effective treatment for depression. Concurrent guidance of a mental health professional is strongly recommended. The therapist or counselor will listen to your concerns, screen you for symptoms of depression, and assist you in developing ways to address your stress and build new coping patterns." Please contact Denise Kee-White [see contact info above] for more information about caregiver depression and treatment.

By Denise Kee-White, LCSW

Support Groups and Upcoming Events

ONEgeneration Caregiver Support Groups are free and held at ONEgeneration JOY Center 17400 Victory Blvd Van Nuys, 91406 818.708.6625

Saturday February 1st from 1:30pm to 3pm at the JOY Center-please call 818.708.6625 for more information

Tuesdays January 21st, and February 4th and 18th from 3:00pm-4:30pm at the JOY Center please call 818.708.6376 for more information

Grupo de Apoyo al Cuidador Español durante cuatro semanas

Miércoles:

22 de Enero

26 de Febrero

25 de Marzo

22 de Abril

Para más información, llame a Dulce Flores, MSW Intern 818.708.6639 Dulce está aquí sólo los lunes y miércoles

Adult Daycare is open TWO Saturdays per month. Does your loved one (adult with dementia or in need of supervision) need care on the weekend? Services include supervised activities, breakfast, lunch, afternoon snack, and assistance with personal care. Hours: 9:30 am-3:30 pm Cost: \$75 /day-private pay only* For eligibility criteria, dates, and information about enrolling please contact (818) 708-6625.

