

# Caring for the Caregiver:

- Recognizing Stress & When to Seek Help





# About WIHA

- **Mission:** To improve the health and well-being of all people as we age by disseminating evidence-based programs and practices and by engaging in collaborative public health strategies in Wisconsin and beyond.
- <https://wihealthyaging.org>
- **Age Well Newsletter**



# Introduction to Speaker

**Sue Coyle, COTA, BA, CMC**

**Coyle Care Management  
and Consulting, LLC**





Wisconsin Institute  
for Healthy Aging

**COYLE**

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**CARE MANAGEMENT**  
and **CONSULTING, LLC**

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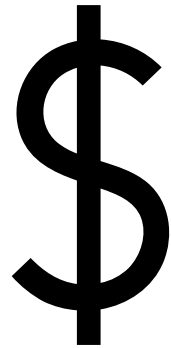
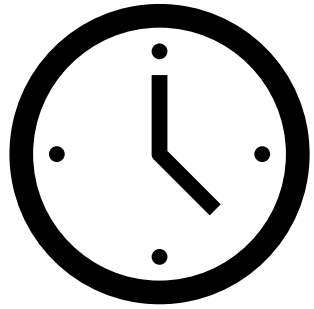
# Recognizing Caregiver Stress and When to Seek Help



# Who Is a Caregiver?

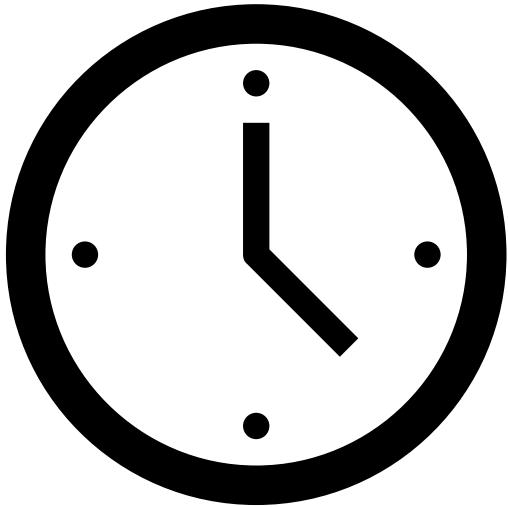
- ▶ Anybody who provides care or *assistance* to another, mainly for physical or emotional needs
- ▶ Most are women, and the average age of caregivers is 49.4, with one-quarter between 18 and 34 y/o.
- ▶ Nearly 1/5 of all adults will be a caregiver for another adult at some point

# Caregivers' Biggest Concerns:



- ▶ Time
- ▶ Money
- ▶ Health - of the Care Recipient AND the Caregiver

# Time



- ▶ Most (61%) caregivers are also holding down a job while serving as a caregiver, with the majority (60%) working 40 hours or more per week. Caregiving can affect caregiver's work lives, with six in ten (61%) employed caregivers noting that they had experienced a change in their work situation, including more than half who reported going in late, leaving early, or needing to take time off.

[Source: [Caregiving in the U.S., 2020](#), national sample fielded May 28-June 17, 2019.]

- ▶ Also common among caregivers are experiencing emotional stress (72%), having to miss an important meeting or event (67%), and needing to balance their work, family, and caregiving responsibilities (65%).

[Source: [U.S. Voters' Views on Family Caregiving](#), fielded April 2023.]

# Money \$

**New AARP  
Report Finds  
Family  
Caregivers  
Provide \$600  
Billion in Unpaid  
Care Across the  
U.S. (in 2021)**

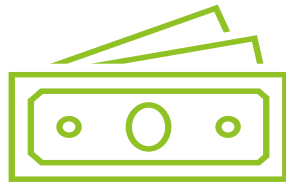
**2023 Article  
Headline**



# Health



The \$ cost of care is a huge concern, but the physical, emotional, and mental cost to the caregiver is sometimes even more significant.



Even those who can afford to pay for care also experience Caregiver Stress in various ways and at various times.



# STRESS!!! ☹️

- ▶ Physical and emotional fatigue or strain caused by prolonged care for another.
- ▶ Can lead to Caregiver Burnout



- ▶ Change or loss of relationship with the Care Recipient
  - ▶ Role reversal of parent-child relationship (Mom/Dad)
  - ▶ “loss” of “the real Mom” that I used to know  
=> Grief
- ▶ Financial concerns and/or strains
- ▶ Worry or fear about the future
- ▶ Live far away
- ▶ Too many things to balance - CG, work, family, social, health
- ▶ Care is too physically demanding
- ▶ Lack of previous healthy and/or enjoyable outlets
  - ▶ Shopping, social, exercise, hobbies, baking, reading, gardening, etc.

## Potential Causes

# Signs of Caregiver Stress or Burnout



Becoming easily angered and/or impatient



Chronic fatigue, not sleeping enough or even too much



Weight change - loss or gain



Losing interest in activities that previously were enjoyable



Frequent headaches or other physical aches and pains



# (more) Signs of Caregiver Stress or Burnout

Difficult decision making

Exhausted and irritable

Work suffers - absence, distraction, less productivity, withdrawn

Accident prone

Excessive worry

Feelings of hopelessness, guilt, resentment, sadness, inadequacy

# (more) Signs of Caregiver Stress or Burnout

Increased illness,  
neglecting own  
personal care,  
health, and  
appointments

Decline, injury, or  
neglect of Care  
Recipient

Excessive use of  
alcohol or drugs,  
including  
prescriptions

Anger and  
Resentment

Others?

# Caregiver Self- Assessments

Do privately, but seek help if score indicates high burden

Caregiver Self-  
Assessment  
Questionnaire  
(AMA)

- <https://www.healthinaging.org/tools-and-tips/caregiver-self-assessment-questionnaire>

Zarit Burden  
Scale

- <https://wai.wisc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/1129/2021/11/Zarit-Caregiver-Burden-Assessment-Instruments.pdf>

# Questions I Ask and Assess For



- ▶ What is most important to you at this time?
- ▶ What would you most like to have help with?
- ▶ What do you feel most stressed about?
- ▶ What do you do for pleasure or enjoyment?
- ▶ Who do you have for your support circle?
- ▶ Is your loved one *aware of the need for care*?
- ▶ *Accepting* of “care”? (assistance)

\*\*\* Everybody's needs are unique at any given time.



# Potential Results of CG Stress



Weakened immune system, increased illnesses - acute or chronic



Mental health issues such as anxiety and/or depression



Drug or alcohol addiction




Short-term memory loss and/or brain fog, lack of focus



Digestive issues



Chronic fatigue





# What Can Be Done

▶ To Prevent or Help Caregiver Stress?

# Measure Your Mood! Recognize and Name Your Emotions (and the Care Recipient's)

## FEELINGS THERMOMETER

	How do you feel?	What can you do about it?
	<b>ANGRY, FURIOUS, EXPLOSIVE</b> ▶ Yelling, Stomping, Meltdown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Vigorous physical exercise</li><li>• Breathe deep breaths</li><li>• Take a warm shower or bath</li></ul>
	<b>FRUSTRATED, ANNOYED, IRRITABLE</b> ▶ Arguing, Refusing, Shutting down	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Meditate/pray</li><li>• Listen to favorite music</li><li>• Take a fast-paced walk</li></ul>
	<b>ANXIOUS, WORRIED, UNSETTLED</b> ▶ Pacing, Avoiding, Clingy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Talk to a family member/friend</li><li>• Pay attention to each of your 5 senses</li><li>• Focus on what you <i>can</i> control</li></ul>
	<b>SAD, NEGATIVE, LONELY</b> ▶ Crying, Withdrawn, Slowed/Disengaged	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Set a positive goal for the day</li><li>• Call a friend or relative</li><li>• Journal about your feelings</li></ul>
	<b>HAPPY, CALM, CONTENT</b> ▶ Smiling, Laughing, Engaged	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Help someone else</li><li>• Notice and enjoy your positive mood</li><li>• Engage in an enjoyable activity</li></ul>



# Use Your Senses

Focus on things you can:

▶ See

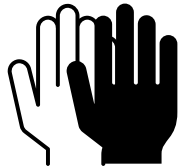


▶ Hear



shutterstock - 197842244

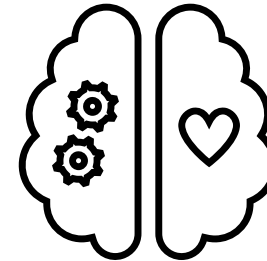
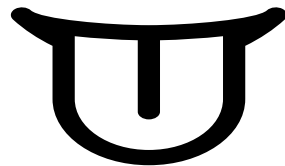
▶ Touch



▶ Smell



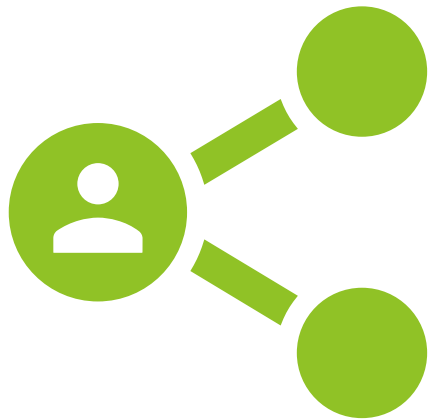
▶ Taste



▶ Imagine or visualize (or deep breathing or meditation)



# Other Ways to Cope



- ▶ Reach out to talk to a friend or support group
- ▶ Stay socially connected - church, book studies, Pickleball, family and friends, etc.
- ▶ Self-Care
  - ▶ Eat healthy
  - ▶ Get good sleep
  - ▶ Movement, exercise, or even just stretching
  - ▶ Meditation
  - ▶ Journal - gratitude, feelings, prayers, etc.

# ASK FOR HELP!

- ▶ It's a sign of strength, not weakness, especially for men
- ▶ Break big tasks into small tasks
- ▶ Don't reply "I'm fine" when people ask how you're doing or how they can help. Be truthful and take them up on the offer immediately.
  - ▶ "Thanks so much for asking. Here's what could be helpful for me..."
- ▶ Keep a list of things for others to do for you and DELEGATE them!
- ▶ If it's easier, send a text or email to ask or if you think of something late at night that could be helpful.
  - ▶ Something as simple as staying with the CR to allow the CG time away.
- ▶ Don't take "No" personally and recognize that others have their comfort levels and skill-sets.



# Outside Help

WIHA, AARP, NIH,  
Alzheimer's Association,  
Educational Institutions,  
Eldercare Locator.....

County ADRCs - Aging  
and Disability Resource  
Centers

- Respite care, in-home support, providing resources, etc.

Fox Valley Memory  
Project - for fun and  
activity with your Care  
Recipient

Talk with your physician  
(share your self-  
assessment score!)

A professional counselor  
- express emotions in a  
safe environment and  
learn coping skills

Find a support group,  
Outagamie Caregiver  
Coalition has a monthly  
virtual "Caregiver Chat"  
(4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of each  
month)

Professional Diagnosis Associations - Parkinson's,  
LBD, MS, Cancer, etc.



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## Outside Help

- ▶ A Professional and Certified Aging Life (aka Geriatric) Care Manager®
- ▶ Many years experience with Older Adults, Caregivers, Dementia, Disabilities, etc.
- ▶ [www.coylecaremanagement.com](http://www.coylecaremanagement.com)
- ▶ [sue@coylecaremanagement.com](mailto:sue@coylecaremanagement.com)
  - ▶ 920-740-8441



# What Does an Aging Life Care Manager® Do?

- ▶ LISTENS!
- ▶ Assesses strengths and needs of the Caregiver and Care Recipient - separately and together.
- ▶ Assists with determining needs and the best options for both
- ▶ Can tailor a personalized plan and help with setting up additional care or resources
- ▶ Can be the neutral, objective person to advocate for the client's needs and wishes
- ▶ Can be the “navigator” through the many programs and services
- ▶ Can save time and money
- ▶ Can provide hope and reassurance

A close-up portrait of Maya Angelou, an elderly Black woman with short, curly grey hair. She is wearing a blue jacket and a large, colorful, chunky necklace. She has a thoughtful expression, looking slightly to the side.

People will forget  
what you said,  
people will forget  
what you did, but  
people will never  
forget how you  
made them feel.

[Soulveda.com](http://Soulveda.com)

## Words of Wisdom and Encouragement

Thank You For  
Attending!

Take Good Care!

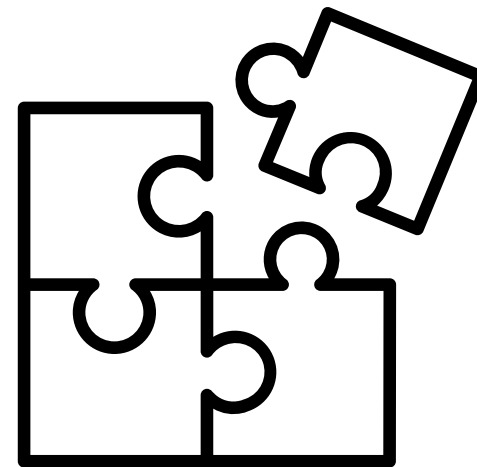
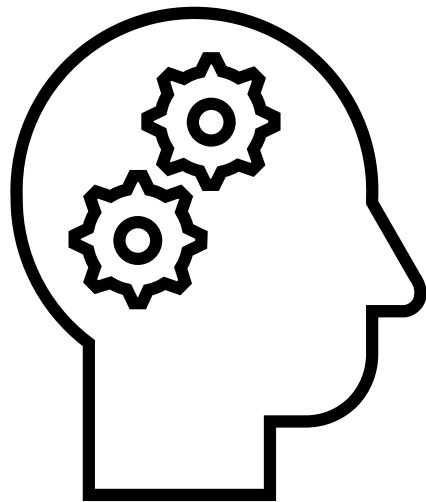


# Keep An Open Heart!



Know that help  
is available  
and you don't  
have to do it  
all alone!





# Questions and Discussion

# Feedback

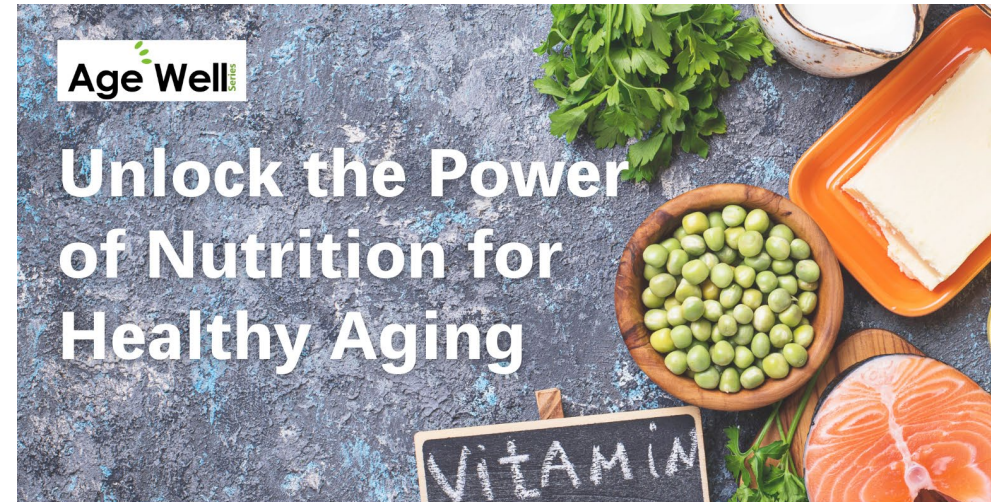
- <https://wiha.wufoo.com/forms/wd5ewvd1ifc54f/>
- Share your thoughts
- Those who complete the eval **live** will be entered to win a t-shirt!





# Next for Age Well Series

- March 26, 11-12pm



Are you ready to take charge of your health and vitality as you age? Join us for an exciting webinar that dives into the essential vitamins and minerals older adults need to feel their best. Discover how small changes to your nutrition can make a big impact on your energy, immunity, and overall well-being!

We'll explore the must-haves for healthy aging, like Vitamin D for strong bones, B12 for a sharp mind, and magnesium and potassium to keep your heart happy. Plus, we'll share practical tips on incorporating nutrient-rich foods into your meals and discuss when supplements might come in handy. Join us!



Speaker: Pam VanKampen  
Registered Dietitian  
Nutritionist (RDN)  
GWAAR

**March 26**  
**11-12pm**  
**Free Webinar**

