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Geriatrics, Alzheimer's and Adult Caregivers



As parents and loved ones begin to age, the responsibility of caring for them often rests on the shoulders of their children or close family. Dealing with the thought of aging parents can be emotionally stressful enough, but caring for your aging parents can put another emotional strain on your lives. While coping with aging parents is a hard task, loved ones or parents who develop Alzheimer's disease can also put a large strain on caregivers. In this newsletter we hope to provide you with information on how to cope with being an adult caregiver, as you learn more about geriatrics and Alzheimer's disease.

What is Geriatrics?

Geriatrics is a branch of medicine that focuses on the health care of the elderly. It aims to promote health and to prevent and treat diseases and disabilities in older adults. There is no set age at which patients may start seeing a geriatrician; rather it is determined by a profile of problems that geriatrics focuses on. While most people think that geriatrics simply deals with physical care, emotional and mental care is also needed. Geriatric counseling services are specifically provided for the elderly and their family. It can encompass dealing with all the issues for which one would see any counselor-but specializing in geriatrics.

Alzheimer's¹

Alzheimer's disease is a progressive, degenerative disease of the brain, which causes thinking and memory to become seriously impaired. It is the most common form of dementia. The following are warning signs to look for in aging adults:

- Memory loss that affects day-to-day function
- Difficulty performing familiar tasks
- Problems with Language
- Poor or decreased judgment
- Problems with abstract thinking
- Misplacing things

Online Resources may be found at the bottom of this newsletter.

- Changes in mood and behavior
- Changes in personality
- Loss of initiative

While this list is not exhaustive, these warning signs may be able to help track problems with elderly adults. Please be sure to seek appropriate care as soon as you feel it these symptoms may be suspect to a bigger problem, such as Alzheimer's.

Adult Caregivers²

Adult caregivers are under extreme emotional stress. Caregivers are often times torn between taking care of their parents and their own children (These persons often being called the "Sandwich Generation"). This can take quite a bit out of any one, so making sure to find appropriate coping strategies is extremely important. The following are strategies that that therapists may help adult caregivers to include in their daily routines:

- **Promote** well-being through activities that encourage creativity and coping strategies.
- **Provide** strategies to balance work, caregiving, and family demands.
- **Recognize** that the needs of caregivers must be met in addition to the needs of an older adult with a disability or disorder.
- **Encourage** caregivers to accept that feeling stress, anger, frustration, and sadness at the situation is not uncommon, and that it is acceptable to express these feelings.
- **Explore** coping strategies and encourage healthy activities such as exercise, group or individual therapy, and other hobbies.
- **Stay** informed of current research on conditions and intervention techniques to share with clients.

Getting help is extremely important when trying to be an adult caregiver. The following are ways that friends or family can help adult caregivers:

- **Join** a therapy or discussion group for caregivers of older adults.
- **Share** the responsibility of caring for an older adult.
- **Ask** others for help.
- **Develop** a schedule that distributes caregiving responsibility.
- **Consider** adult day care or home health aides to provide occasional breaks to full-time caregivers.
- **Create** moments of joy throughout the day by engaging in pleasurable activities, if only for a few minutes.

Contact Us

Hours: Monday – Friday, 8:30-5:00pm. Evening hours are available on a limited basis.

(540) 989-6605 or 800-699-9396

Nights and weekends call RESPOND:

(540) 776-1100 or 800-541-9992

Advantage EAP does not necessarily endorse any products or services mention.

Who can help?



While seeking counseling services for aging and elderly adult parents, it is also important that you as a caregiver seek help as well. Taking care of a aging parent can be a very emotional and stressful time. Here at Psychological Health-Roanoke we have many clinicians that provide services for geriatrics and adult caregivers.

- David Meshorer, Ph. D.- offers geriatrics counseling (even by going to local nursing homes to offer his services).
- Alison Allsbrook, LCSW- offers geriatrics, grief and loss and adult caregivers counseling. She also offers home visits as a service to aging adults.
- Lola Byrd, Psy. D.-offers geriatrics counseling. Dr. Byrd is also bi-lingual in Spanish.
- Charles Finn, LPC-offers grief counseling
- Jane C. Hundley, LCSW- offers grief and loss counseling.
- Bruce Sellars, Psy. D.-offers geriatrics counseling.

Seeking counseling is extremely important for you or a loved one who needs help in dealing with aging adult parents, relatives or close friends. Also making sure that your aging loved one receives counseling, if wanted or needed, is important as well.

Please contact Psychological Health-Roanoke for any further questions regarding our counseling services.

Resources:

- 1) <http://www.alzheimer.ca/english/disease/whatisit-intro.htm>
 - 2) <http://www.aota.org/Consumers/35161.aspx>
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