



Supporting Aged Care Staff



Staff Support and Self Care



Working in an Aged Care facility is a unique but demanding role. Having to meet the needs of individuals who may not always show their support and appreciation of the work you do can be challenging.

It requires individuals, like yourselves, to care and personally connect with a range of elderly individuals whilst supporting their needs as they may be unable to care for themselves. Your compassion towards cognitively impaired residents may be difficult and stressful yet, simultaneously rewarding.

Feeling stressed due to work is likely and not uncommon. Overall, staff report the following strategies as useful when dealing with stress as a result of work:

- ✓ Having clear boundaries between work and home in order to be able to leave work behind
- ✓ Engaging in more family time and leisure activities
- ✓ Talking with other nurses and sharing an understanding of quality care between staff and the organisation
- ✓ Feeling supported by facility management for mitigating stress
- ✓ Connecting with nature such as walking
- ✓ Talking to outside of work friends & family about experiences and emotions
- ✓ Having counselling and organising confidential support programs for if problems arise or advice is needed, at no cost to staff.

A Self-Care Guide for Aged Care Staff

Being a caregiver, your role is often critical but also tends to be invisible in society. When families and friends get together, everyone tends to focus on the comfort and feelings of the patient. They assume that the caregivers are happy in the role and able to cope.

Keeping Yourself Healthy!

The first step you need to take is to acknowledge that your health is just as important as the person that you are caring for.

However, many caregivers are so focused on their charges that they often do the following:

- Don't sleep enough
- Have poor eating habits
- Don't exercise
- Don't rest when they are ill
- Don't monitor themselves
- Don't go for medical appointments

Sometimes, stress also drives those caring for the elderly to rely of prescription medications, smoking or alcohol as a form of relief.



A Support Network

Creating a support network either with friends or colleagues may be essential in ensuring that you feel supported and loved by those around you! As it is imperative that just as you continuously care for a wide range of individuals, your friends, family members and loved ones are caring for you!

Managing Your Reactions to Stress

Caring for an individual with mental or physical needs **IS** exhausting.



Staying Active

Staying active and avoiding being isolated will also help you to manage your stress better. Making time to exercise, even if it is just half an hour of;

- Simple stretches
- A walk in the park

Keep in touch with people, through social media, messaging or regular and planned meet-ups.

Individuals, like yourselves must evaluate your own personal habits and try to gauge how well you are able to manage the pressure. It is imperative that you recognise the signs of excessive stress in your life.

The following are signs of extreme stress:

- Irritability
- Unusual sleep patterns
- High anxiety
- Forgetfulness
- Feelings of excessive guilt
- Frustration
- Depression

If this is happening to you, take some time out to evaluate what the main causes of stress are for you. By talking to a close friend or even a professional counsellor may help you discover ways to reduce stress and in turn may assist you in caring for other individuals.

Once you have a better understanding of what is troubling you, you will be able to take steps to address them.

Motivating and Encouraging the Elderly

Encourage Manageable Goals

Young people and adults in their prime are frequently reminded to set and accomplish goals. Being goal oriented can instil motivation, a sense of purpose and pride in accomplishment.

By assisting the elderly create a few daily, manageable goals you can assist them in finding meaning as even accomplishing a seemingly simple task (to us) can sometimes make their day!



Encourage the Feeling of Usefulness

Many cognitively active older adults want to feel a sense of usefulness, even if their physical functions are limited.

Identify and introduce conversational topics or tasks where the senior can feel wanted and needed. For example:

- Ask them for advice on practical as well as important life matters. Converse with them like they are mentors
- Ask for their opinions on certain decisions you need to make
- Introduce manageable project or tasks for them to be in charge of where they'll feel a sense of accomplishment.

Engaging the Elderly

How to keep the elderly *'sharp as a tack'*

Quality of life means living in a well-rounded lifestyle. Ensuring social interactions and participation in physical activity helps to maintain independence and keeps residents stimulated.

Ensuring stimulation is imperative to keep their bodies moving, brains active and spirits lifted. There are several ways to accomplish this, including:

- **Encourage residents to listen to audiobooks**
- **Offer selections of their favourite music to keep brain cells stimulated**
- **Encourage engagement in exercise classes or excursions**
- **Encourage participation in various activities and/or programs**

Staying Active, Staying Healthy

Studies have shown that basic fitness and physical activity for the elderly helps to stave off a range of motion and mobility issues.

Exercise also tends to encourage higher spirits and gets an individual into social environments that are good for stimulating interest in events, people and their own future.

Special classes such as Zumba, swimming, walking and yoga include benefits such as lower risks of heart diseases, diabetes, high blood pressure and osteoarthritis, among others.



Keeping elderly individuals active may present as an issue as they aren't always interested in a variety of activities. The most common reasons for the elderly not joining in such activities may include comments like:

- "I don't know anyone there; I feel uncomfortable"
- "I can't move very well"
- "I'm afraid I'm going to fall if I move around too much"
- "I'm comfortable here"

