

BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO CAREGIVING

Caregiving can be a source of deep personal rewards, and, at the same time, one of the most stressful and difficult tasks an individual or family may encounter.

Spouses, partners, sons, daughters, grandchildren, extended family members, friends and neighbors – *overtime we learn and understand the rules of what it means to behave as a “good” son, “good” daughter, etc.*

But what happens when we become a “caregiver” for someone who has a debilitating illness that requires help with personal care needs? *The fact is: many find this new role confusing. “I don’t know what it means to be a “good” caregiver!”* Researchers have identified that the gap of understanding/comfort between a former role(s) vs. a caregiver role is a major cause of stress.

Regarding the word “caregiver” - many family caregivers don’t even recognize themselves as “caregivers.” They will say “It’s just what families and friends do for each other”. But, recognize the caregiver role or not, the *amount of stress* can grow quickly when the caregiver struggles with this “caregiver identity” while attempting to balance the time spent on caregiving with work, family, and personal responsibilities.

Some caregivers have successfully learned to not only manage the stresses of caregiving but also the ups and downs of this often ever-changing process...that unfolds over time.

But others feel that the caregiver experience is not manageable, that their stress is an unavoidable part of caregiving, and that their own self-care is out of reach....leaving them feeling helpless and very alone.

Imagine – wanting to provide the quality care the care receiver deserves and not being able to do that. What gets in the way? Things like...

- Lack of sleep,
- Depression,
- Increased isolation, and
- Getting stuck in very difficult feelings.

Our Caregiver Support Program services are delivered by certified Caregiver Specialists who support caregivers as they learn to manage their caregiving experience – whether short-term or over a long term.

Remember, you can remain active in the program as long as you continue to need and use caregiver support services and meet the program’s eligibility requirements; and, it is best - for both the program and you - to be fully engaged in the Assessment process.

Since 2009 the program has used an evidenced-based Assessment tool. Assessment results suggest specific services designed to make a difference and leads to a tailored care plan that addresses the caregiver’s unique needs.

Snohomish County Caregiver Support Program

To make an appointment please contact a Caregiver Specialist:

Senior Services: (425) 290-1240

Alzheimer’s Association: (206) 363-5500

Stillaguamish Senior Center: North County: (425) 248-5276

Stillaguamish Senior Center: East and South County: (425) 248-5156