

### CAREGIVERS AND DEPRESSION

Caregivers are at risk for becoming depressed. And when they have additional responsibilities such as jobs or are caring for children this risk increases. Taking on these responsibilities and not asking for help can lead to fatigue, being overworked, and overwhelmed; this can be an invitation to becoming depressed.

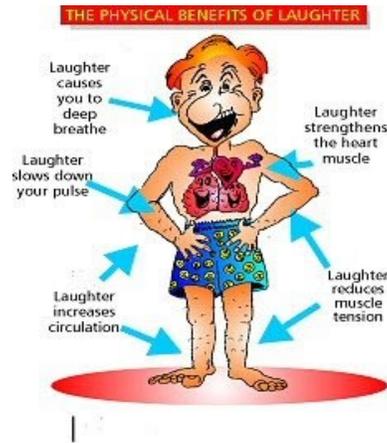
There are a number of warning signs that are red flags that may indicate you may be a candidate to becoming depressed.

1. You may begin to feel sad, be pessimistic most of the time, start to lose interest in things like your social life, work or leisure pursuits.
2. You may start to have physical symptoms that can include but are not restricted to feeling lethargic, have weight loss or weight gain, fatigue, wanting to sleep more, or no appetite.
3. You may experience feelings of worthlessness, become indecisive, loose concentration, have insomnia or become restless.
4. You may have thoughts of suicide.
5. Depression in men can also cause them to become withdrawn, feel irritable, aggressive, or hostile.

### WHAT CAN YOU DO TO CURTAIL DEPRESSION

1. **Talk** to someone about your symptoms, share your feelings so that they don't escalate into problems, **see your doctor** - do not isolate yourself.
2. **Set limits**— Learn to use the word “no”. Instead of taking on more responsibilities or doing everything yourself - ask for help. Be realistic on what you can do.

4. **Eat** nutritiously, exercise regularly and get enough sleep—Having these needs met will go a long way to keeping your mind and body healthy.



5. **Keep a sense of humour** - try and find the humour in your daily life. Go ahead and laugh. Relax with a funny movie or TV show. Put on a comedy tape to listen to while you do your chores. Find the humor in everyday things.

**Laughter** decreases stress hormones and increases immune cells and infection-fighting antibodies, thus improving your resistance to disease.

**Laughter** triggers the release of endorphins, the body's natural feel-good chemicals. Endorphins promote an overall sense of well-being and can even temporarily relieve pain.

**Source:** <http://www.webmd.com/depression/guide/detecting-depression>

## New Exciting Research of Bipolar Brain

For further information go to:

<http://blogs.psychcentral.com/bipolar-update/2015/04/new-exciting-research-of-bipolar-brain/>

## 7 Tips to Make Personal Care Less Awkward for Family Caregivers

Excerpts from: <http://www.caregiverstress.com/geriatric-professional-resources/share-clients/7-tips-to-make-personal-care-less-awkward-for-family-caregivers/>

Is there anything more heart-wrenching than an adult child watching her mom decline to a point where she needs to help with toileting? Or more awkward than a son having to coax his dad into a shower and help him wash? These personal care tasks can be hard for a senior's family member to take on, and just as difficult for seniors who feel their dignity slipping away.

Here are seven suggestions to help you overcome awkward situations:

**1. Think differently.** It might help to tell family members to think of the tasks in medical or scientific terms to help take the emotional heat out of it. Instead of a daughter changing her mom's diaper, she's changing her incontinence briefs to keep her clean and healthy.

**2. Maximize their abilities.** If the person can handle part of the task, see if he or she is capable of doing the things that are most difficult for both parties, like washing private

parts.

**3. Distraction is your friend.** There is an old episode of MASH in which Hot Lips Houlihan, the gorgeous nurse, has to give a sponge bath to a bashful young soldier. She explains that the way to get it done quickly, efficiently, and with little embarrassment is to carry on a normal conversation and look the patient in the eye. Other distractions can also help, like reminiscing about shared good memories or singing favorite old songs.

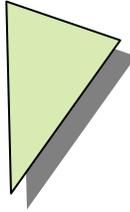
**4. Make it as much fun as possible.**

Bubbles, spa-like soaps, a few flameless candles and some soft music can turn a dreaded routine into something the senior can look forward to.

**5. Take the easy route.** Use bathing wipes between full baths and dry shampoo for between wet washes. Try wet wipes when toileting for better (and faster) cleaning.

**6. A time for everything.** Create a regular routine for the senior's hygiene tasks, especially if the senior has dementia. Make regular bathing something that happens before church, for example, and always brush teeth before breakfast. Encourage family caregivers to help senior loved ones with personal care tasks when they are most alert. Avoid personal care tasks during difficult times, like evenings for those Alzheimer's patients who experience sun downing.

**7. Ask for help.** If the family member is having trouble doing these tasks or if they are combative, let them know there is no shame in asking for assistance. Overwhelmed families can benefit from respite care offered by churches and community groups. While these suggestions can make personal tasks less awkward for family caregivers and seniors alike, seeing a parent or aging loved one's abilities decline can still take an emotional toll.



## TAX CREDIT RESOURCE INFORMATION

Claim the Caregiver amount on your tax return-----You can claim the *Caregiver amount* tax credit. Go to the following **WEB SITE** for further information: <http://www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/lifeevents/caregiver.shtml>



**Getting through the holidays** can be an emotional roller coaster for both the caregiver and care recipient. During Christmas there are added complications when routines

change because of the festivities, and there are added responsibilities such as decorating, preparing for guests, buying presents, scheduling visits with family members, and cooking that family dinner.

Here are a few tips to help you through these tough times – Excerpts from Amy Goyer.

**Plan Ahead.** If you are going to cook a big meal for people this holiday season, give yourself as much lead time as possible and freeze the dishes that you can. This will help you with time management on the day of your event. If your loved one doesn't already live with you and is coming in for the holiday, keep in mind that they might need a quiet place to escape the chaos or even take a nap. Plan to set aside a private space or room where they can find comfort and relaxation.

**Enlist Help.** There's no reason you should have to bear the burden of planning a holiday event and taking care of a loved one on your

own. The great part about this time of year is that you are usually surrounded by family and friends -- all you have to do is ask.

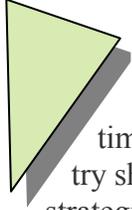
Communicate your needs to them early on to make sure that everyone is prepared and there are no surprises.

**Make Time for yourself.** This is a mantra that we keep telling caregivers. It is not selfish; you can only be fully there for your loved one if you are fully there for yourself. It's easy to feel overwhelmed when you are surrounded by people for an extended period of time, so scheduling in some "me" time will help to keep you centered.

**Have reasonable expectations.** Remember, you can't do it all. Choose those things that are important for you to focus on. This means keep it simple. You could decide to choose just a few decorations, or let "Mrs. Save on Foods" make those delightful Christmas cookies or encouraging guests to bring their own dish for a potluck dinner. Set limits and you'll be ok.

**Acknowledge emotions.** It is perfectly normal for you to experience joy, sadness, frustrations, and fears during the holidays. Try and stay focused on the positives; think about what you can accomplish rather than what you can't, celebrate what your loved ones can do rather than mourning what they can not do. Negative thinking can activate your body's stress response so try and get your mind going down the positive path.

**Anticipate your own holiday hot buttons-** Are there holiday activities or relatives that trigger stress or unhappy memories? Do unhelpful relatives regularly arrive for the holidays and criticize your care giving? Are there topics it's better to avoid when the family gathers? It may be best to limit your exposure to — or even avoid — certain places, events or people. If you can't do that, prepare yourself. Minimize the drama, don't try to resolve long



time family problems over the holidays, try short encounters and develop quick exit strategies. Mentally put yourself in a protective bubble, letting negative energy bounce off without hurting, annoying or distressing you.

**Start new traditions-** Instead of focusing on what you're not doing, try doing something new. If cooking holiday meals is too much for you, eat out or order a prepared meal to have at home to give you more time with family and less time cleaning up. Give the gift of time or attention rather than costly presents. Attend a holiday concert you've never gone to before. Can't make it to a holiday gathering? Use technology and have a video visit.

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### NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

The Side by Side Advisory Committee and myself are collecting information with regard to respite care. As soon as we have more information, I will share it with you.

#### Future Education Sessions

I am presently pursuing guest speakers for February and March; they will be on the topics of Financing and Wills and Estates.

#### No Regular Meeting in December

However, for the November meeting we can decide as a group if you want to get together for a more informal social event.

#### January

Our guest speaker will be **Rosemary Fromson, RPC, MPCP, CCPCPR**, National BC Director for Canadian Professional Counselling Association, Illuminating Counselling Services. Topic Family/Friends/Co-worker conflict related to care giving.

# Resources

Although this is from the American Alzheimer's Society, the article is very comprehensive. Try: link [http://www.alz.org/documents/midlandschapter/holiday\\_tips\\_for\\_caregivers\\_booklet\\_web-11.pdf](http://www.alz.org/documents/midlandschapter/holiday_tips_for_caregivers_booklet_web-11.pdf)

For those caring for individuals with bi-polar – these 12 steps are from the care recipients point of view and may have some helpful hints for you. <http://ibpf.org/blog/12-steps-christmas>

Perhaps this inspirational quote will bring comfort. The following suggestions have come from men and women who have passed various milestones on their own sacred walks. ”: *Eight Ways Caregivers Can Bring Peace and Cheer at Christmas*” From Donna Authors, author of *A Sacred Walk: Dispelling the Fear of Death and Caring for the Dying* (A&A Publishing, 2008, ISBN: 978-0-6152458-5-0,

<http://www.asacredwalk.com/documents/caregiverxmas.pdf>

I wish to thank the Side by Side Advisory Committee for their guidance, dedication and many volunteer hours they have given to this program.

And for you caregivers, I am in awe at your selflessness, your enduring strength and the important role you play in the lives of your loved ones.

My wish for all of you is to find peace and harmony and that your Christmas is a Blessed one.

Merry Christmas  
Paddy

