

Practical Tips in Caregiving

Regina C. Foster, MS, PA-C, CDP, CADDCT, LALFA



OBJECTIVES



DEFINE PERSON-CENTERED
CARE



RECOGNIZE SIGNS OF
BURNOUT



HOW TO BE PROACTIVE VS
REACTIVE



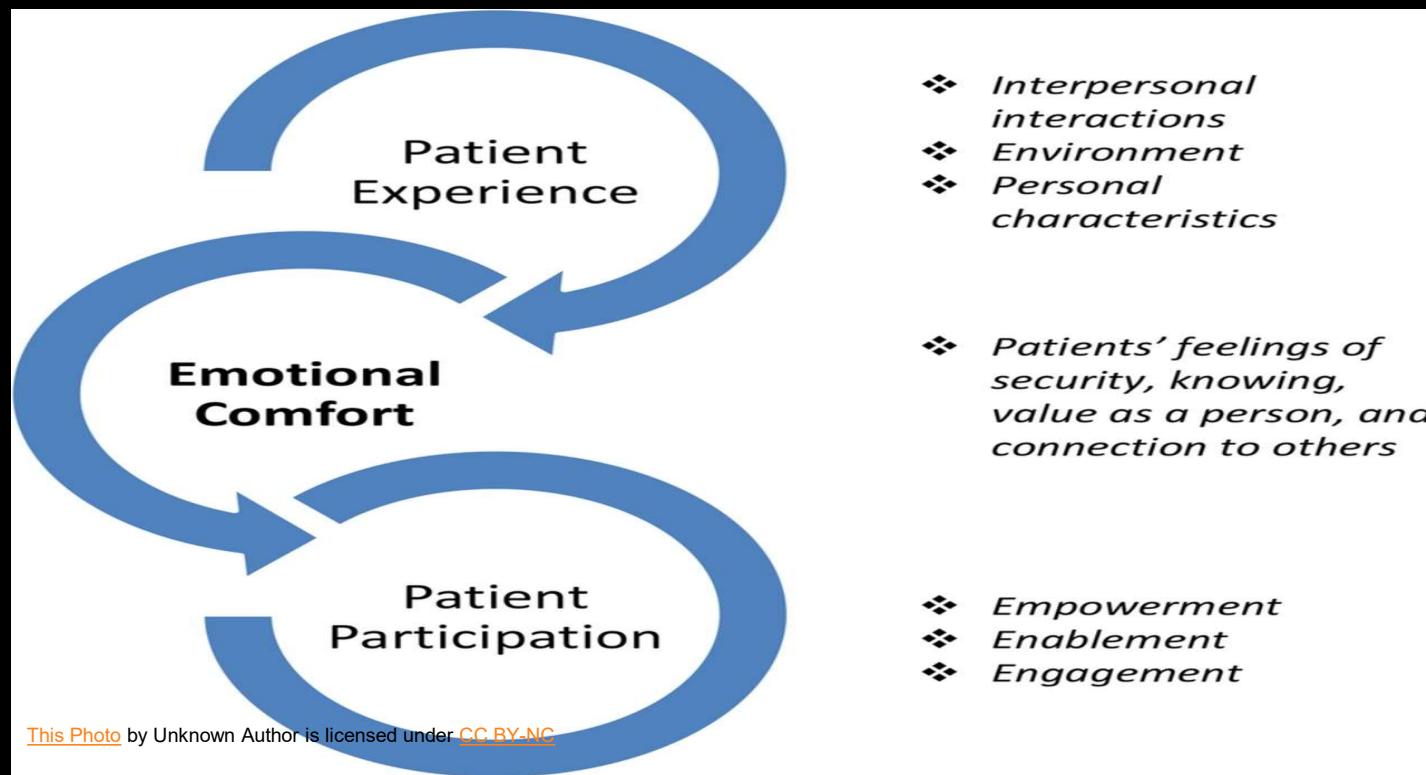
WHAT DOES SUPPORT LOOK
LIKE?

Raise your hand if you can relate to these

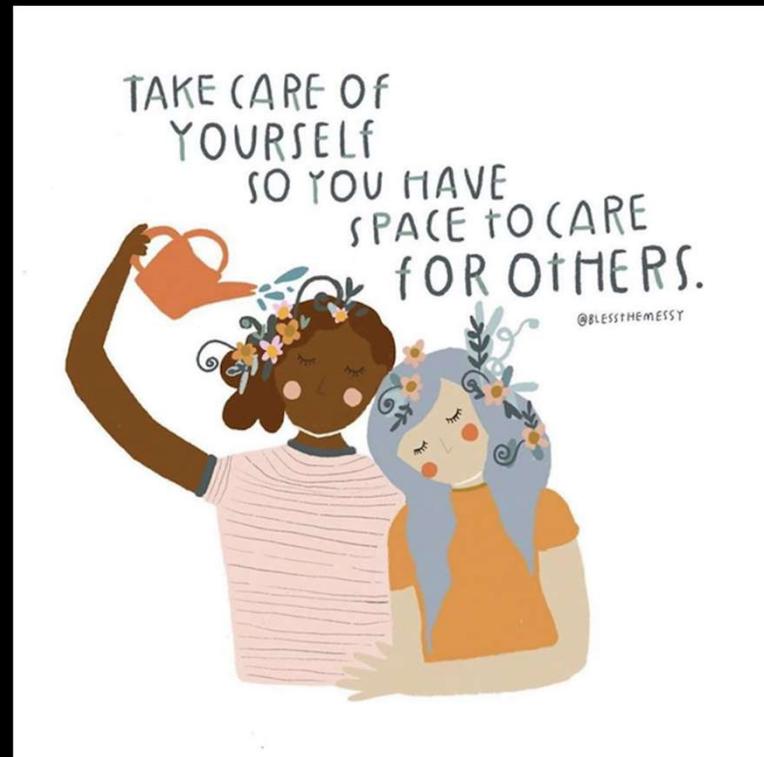
- I always dot my “I”s and cross my “T”!
- I never leave work for the person relieving me!
- My loved one(s) are on a tight schedule!
- I make sure they are fed at least 3 times per day!
- They are always bathed and ready for breakfast!

What is person-centered care?

Person-Centered Care



Why so much talk about self-care lately?



Self-Care



How do we define it?

Definition of Burnout



Recognizing signs of burnout

- Someone else is going to have to do it!
- I really don't care what happens anymore!
- I want to harm myself or I wish harm to others!

Symptoms of burnout vs. engagement

- Exhaustion..... Energy
- Depersonalization..... Involvement
- Inefficiency..... Efficacy

Prevent problems before needing corrective action

Proactive – controlling a situation instead of needing to repair a problem after it's already occurred.

Reactive – actions to respond to a situation (often unfavorable)

How can I be proactive as a care partner?

- Know what I'm up against
- Have conversation with all the stakeholders (loved ones we're caring for, family support, healthcare providers, financial planners, religious/spiritual affiliates or guides)
- Develop support plans

How do we support someone in brain failure?

First: we have to recognize what those changes are?

Familiarizing Self with Loved Ones

- Changes in behavior
- Spotting signs of trauma

Communication: How they communicate

Changes Based on Early (mild) Stage of Dementia

- Difficulty finding the right words.
- Taking longer to speak or respond.
- Withdrawing from conversations.
- Struggling with decision-making or problem-solving.

How we can effectively respond

- Ask directly how to help with communication.
- Keep sentences clear and straightforward.
- Leave plenty of time for conversations.
- Include the person in conversations that affect him or her, like planning for their future.

Ineffective communication in this stage

- Making assumptions
- Making decisions without them
- Pushing our own agendas
- Disconnecting to avoid difficult conversation or other situations

Communication: How they communicate

Changes Based on Middle (moderate) Stage of Dementia

- Increased difficulty finding the right words.
- Using familiar words repeatedly.
- Inventing new words to describe familiar things.
- Easily losing train of thought.
- Speaking less frequently.
- Communicating through behavior rather than words more often.

How we can effectively respond

- Approach gently
- Join their reality
- Keep it slow and basic
- Give multiple cues (visual, gestures)
- Respond empathetically and reassure
- Ask clarifying questions
- Offer a guess or fill in words (if welcomed)
- Hand under hand to help guide

Ineffective communication in this stage

- Criticizing, correcting and arguing
- Watch your tone
- Rushing
- Not acknowledging their emotions
- Quizzing
- Doing things for them versus with them

Communication: How they communicate

Changes Based on Late (severe) Stage of Dementia

- Communication is reduced to a few words or sounds.
- Possible responses to familiar words or phrases.

How we can effectively respond

- Listen and watch for expressions of pain (e.g. moaning or grimacing) and respond promptly.
- Help them feel safe and secure.
- Continue to bring respect to each conversation.
- Keep talking even when they're not responding
- Use all five senses to communicate.

Ineffective communication in this stage

- Sudden movement
- Touching without verbalizing
- Yelling or whispering
- Speaking quickly

Communication in All Stages of Dementia

- Join their reality to connect.
- Understand and accept what you can and cannot change.
- Remember they retain a sense of self, despite the losses.
- Demonstrate respect and connect through feelings.
- Always treat them as an adult.
- Try to decode their communication method.
- Recognize the effects of your mood and actions.
- Try to understand the source of reactions.
- Help meet the needs while soothing and calming them.

Gem States

- Sapphire – Normal aging; Not dementia
- Diamond – First signs of change or signals of a stressed brain
- Emerald – Moderate symptoms of cognitive changes
- Amber – Middle stage changes
- Ruby – Late stage changes
- Pearl – Late stage; end of journey

Overlap of symptoms

- Appetite changes
- Sleep changes
- Energy changes
- Changes with social interaction and interests (loss of)

Benefits of early detection

- Improved QOL

Care partner risks

- Failing health
- Isolation
- Failing relationships
- Abuse & neglect

Coping strategies

- Recruit support
- Resources
- Consultants
- Self-care

REFERENCES

Adelman, A.M. & Daly, M.P. (Ed.). (2001). *Geriatrics: 20 Common Problems*. McGraw-Hill

Alzheimer's Association (2022). SlideShare. Effective Communication. <https://www.alz.org/education>

Beers, M.H. & Berkow, R. (Ed.). (2000). *The Merck Manual of Geriatrics*. (3rd ed.). Merck Research Laboratories.

Brackey, J. (2017). *Creating moments of joy: Along the Alzheimer's journey*. (5th ed., pp. 136-137). Purdue University Press.

Corson, T. (2020). SlideShare. Mental Health and Wellbeing in Aging.

Dechant, P. & Shannon, D. (2020). Preventing Physician Burnout. [no publisher].

Snow, T. (2017). *Dementia caregiver guide: Teepa Snow's Positive Approach to Care techniques for caregiving, Alzheimer's, and other forms of dementia*. Cedar Village Retirement Community.