

# Caregiver Self-Care and Resilience

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RAFT DEMENTIA EDUCATION AND OUTREACH COORDINATOR

# The RAFT Clinical Support Program

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- A program of the DBHDS Regional Projects Office
- Founded through regional advocacy (NVAN)
- Providing services since 2008
- Supports older adults with serious mental illness and dementia with challenging behaviors
- Discharges / diverts older adults from state psychiatric hospitals to nursing homes and assisted livings
- 98% success rate in preventing rehospitalization at state psychiatric hospitals

# RAFT Clinical Support Program: Eligibility Criteria

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**65 years +**

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**Resident of City of Alexandria, Arlington,  
Fairfax, Loudoun, Prince William Counties**

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**Serious mental illness diagnosis or  
dementia with challenging behaviors**

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**Risk of psychiatric hospitalization or  
currently psychiatrically hospitalized**

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**Requires treatment not otherwise  
available to manage illness**

# The RAFT Dementia Support Program

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- Short-term, FREE Program
- Supporting individuals living with dementia and their families in their homes
- Providing education and support to families
- Building caregiver resilience and reducing stress





# Our Services

Trained Dementia Specialists will work with families to:

- Assess and identify challenges or other areas of concern
- Provide individualized education and training on topics such as:
  - Overview of Dementia (types, stages, etc.)
  - Communication
  - Safety
  - Wandering and other challenging behaviors
- Connect to resources and services
- Non-pharmacological interventions
- Plan to prevent crisis
- Respite care in ALF

# Eligibility Requirements

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Resident of the City of Alexandria, Arlington, Fairfax-Falls Church, Loudoun, or Prince William Counties

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55 years and older

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Diagnosis of dementia or exhibiting symptoms of dementia

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Living in the community in their homes, or the homes of family members or other caregivers

# Anyone Can Make a Referral!

[Online Form: www.raftnorthernvirginia.org](http://www.raftnorthernvirginia.org)

Or contact Sydney Palinkas

[spalinkas@arlingtonva.us](mailto:spalinkas@arlingtonva.us)

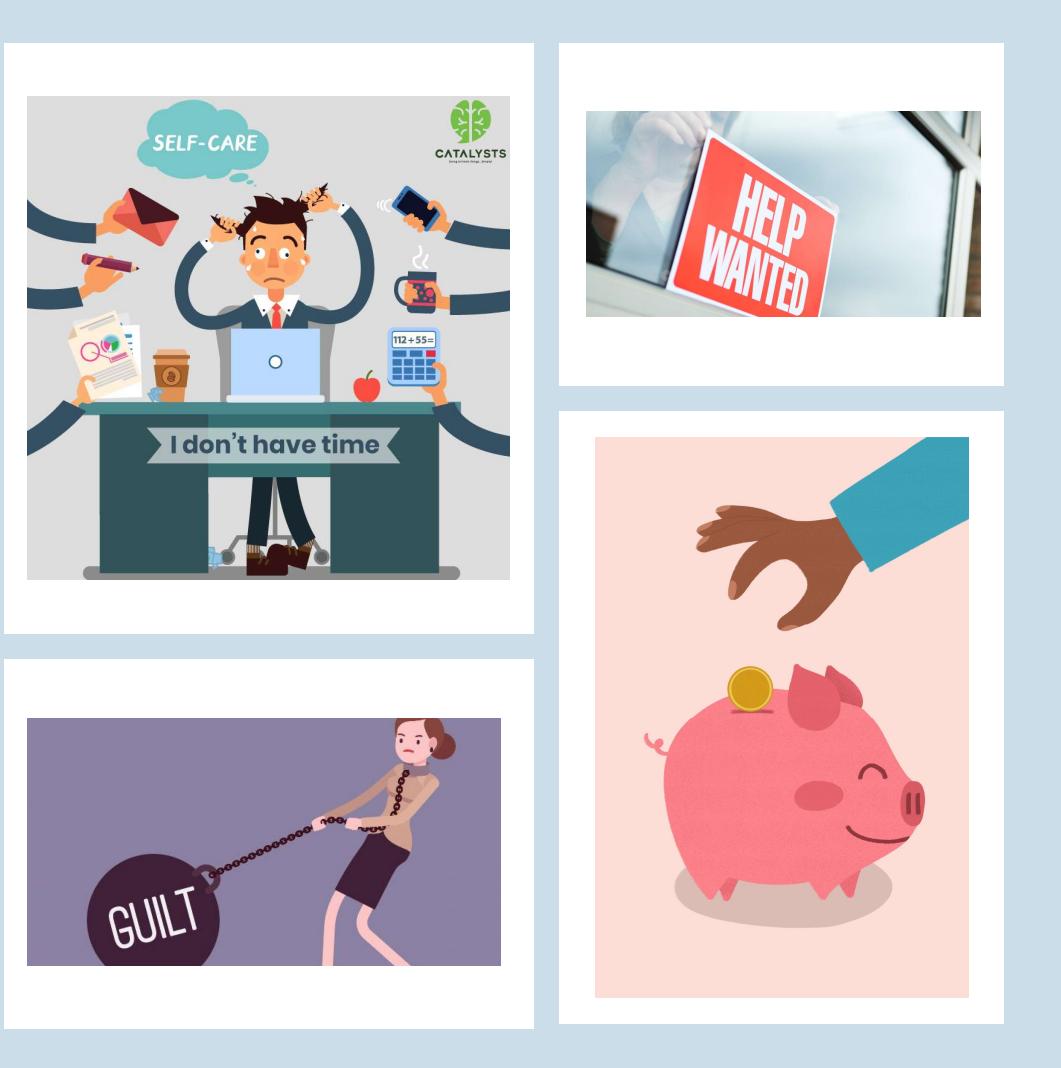
703-814-2701

# RAFT also offers...

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- Free consultations to professionals and families
- Free trainings to community members, professionals, etc.

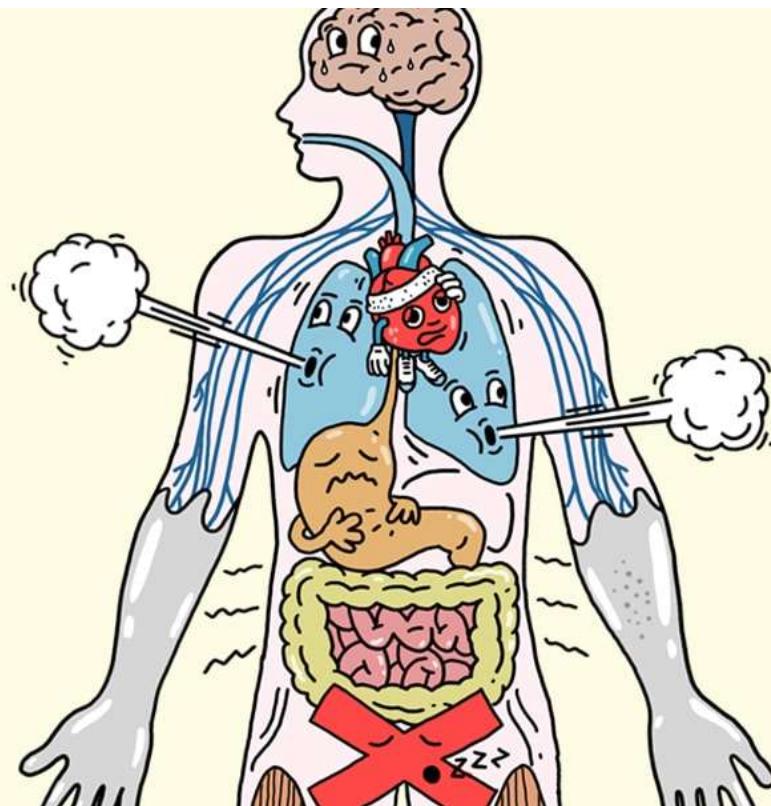




# Common Struggles Faced by Caregivers

- Financial constraints
- Not enough help
- Your loved one saying mean things to you or accusing you of things
- Resistance to care
- Feeling all alone
- Guilt
- No time for self care
- Not able to get enough sleep

# Stress and the Sympathetic Nervous System



# How can caregiving affect you physically?

- Headaches
- Upset stomach
- Body aches, tense muscles
- Frequent infections or colds
- Clenched jaw, grinding teeth
- High blood pressure
- Constant tiredness
- Over / undereating
- Increased use of alcohol



# How can caregiving affect you mentally?

- Forgetfulness
- Trouble concentrating
- Feeling pessimistic or negative
- Feeling out of control
- Mood swings
- Not feeling like yourself
- Emotionally numb
- Sadness
- Anger
- Grief





# How can caregiving affect your behavior?

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- Procrastinating
- Gambling or shopping
- Bingeing television or social media
- Increased number of accidents or mistakes
- Isolating yourself
- Canceling plans



# Resilience

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“THE ABILITY TO WITHSTAND  
AND RECOVER FROM  
CHALLENGES OR DIFFICULTIES”



## Don't Feel Guilty

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Take a moment to consider how you currently take care of your physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual health?

If you didn't change anything about your self care and 3 years went by, what would that look like?

What would that mean for you?

And therefore, what would that mean for your loved one?



# Tips for Caregiver Resilience

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- KNOWLEDGE AND ACCEPTANCE
- FINDING MEANING
- SOCIAL SUPPORT
- PHYSICAL WELL-BEING
- COPING SKILLS



# I. Knowledge & Acceptance

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TAKING CONTROL OF WHAT WE CAN  
AND ACCEPTING WHAT WE CANNOT



## Educate Yourself About Dementia

- Dementia Capable Virginia
- Virginia Dementia Roadmap
- Alzheimer's Association



## Be Open to New Ideas and Approaches

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You know your situation and your loved one best but... can you consider things from another perspective?

Are there new ways of doing things that could make things easier for you?

# Don't Take Things Personally

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- Individuals with dementia may say or do things they don't mean.
- Remind yourself it's the disease, not your loved one.



- Take the advice, criticism, and thoughts from others with a grain of salt.

# Choose Your Battles

- Save your energy for the important things.
- Is it necessary to correct them? What is the benefit?
- If what your loved one is doing is not a safety risk, let it be.
- Instead of correcting, validate and join their reality.



# Accepting Imperfections

There are no perfect caregivers.

There are no perfect spouses.

There are no perfect children.

There are no perfect solutions.

There are is no perfect thing to say or do.

You cannot ever be perfect.

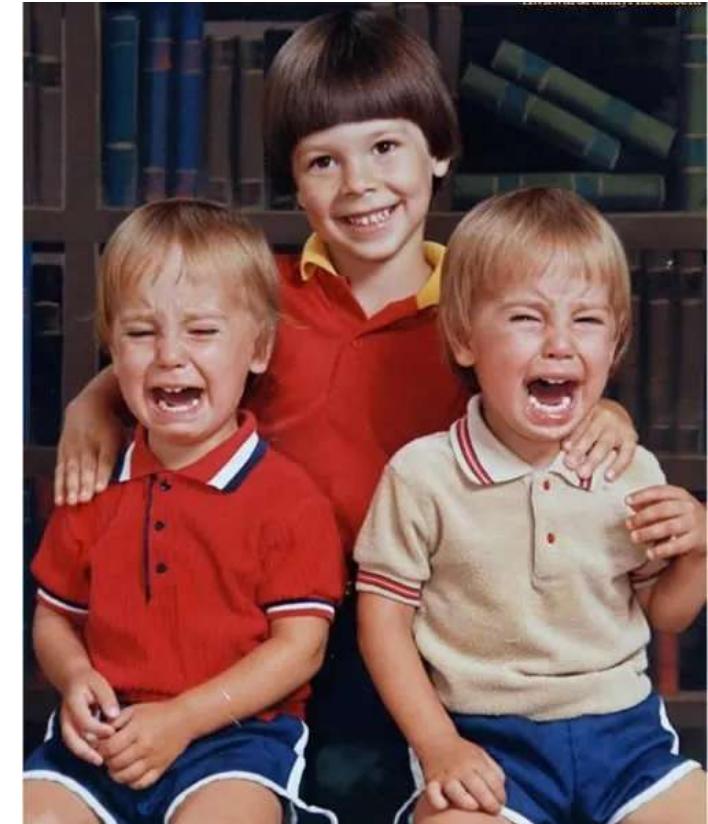
**“PERFECTION  
ISN'T WHAT  
MATTERS.  
IN FACT,  
IT'S THE VERY  
THING THAT  
CAN DESTROY  
YOU...”**

- EMILY GIFFIN  
ITSALLYOUBOO.COM

# Sometimes when we are trying for this...

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We get this instead & that's okay!



# Give Yourself Permission To Feel Your Feelings

It's okay to feel...

Grief

Sad

Angry

Guilty

Scared

Jealous

Resentment

Disappointment



## 2. Finding Meaning

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Find Humor and Joy In Your Day

# Practice Gratitude

- What did I do well today?
- What acts of kindness did you receive or witness?
- Reframe a stressful situation in a positive way
- What are you looking forward to?





# 3. Social Support

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# It Takes A Village

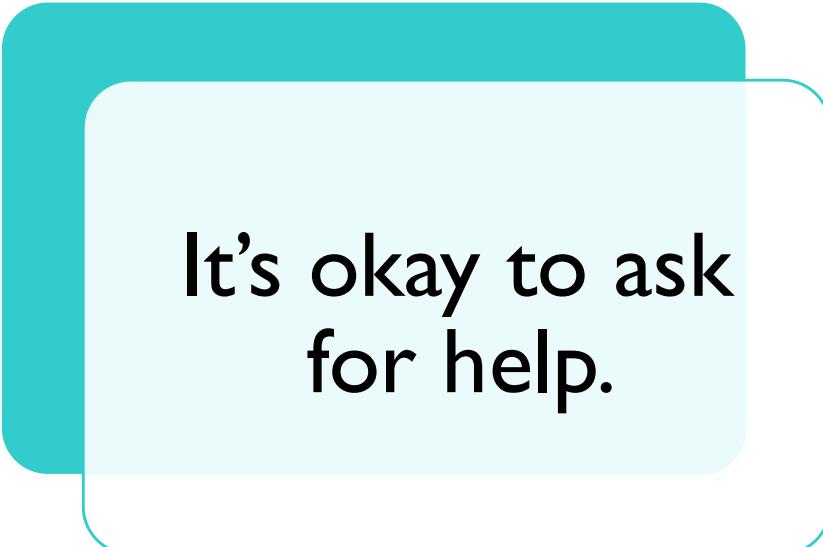
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- Significant others, family members
- Reliable friends
- Colleagues
- Neighbors
- Support groups
- Faith community
- Therapist, counselor

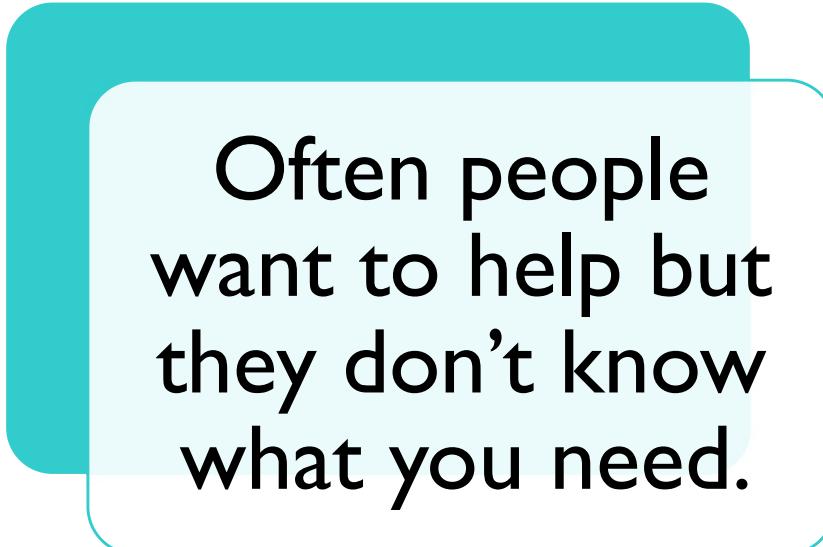
It's also okay to acknowledge those in your life who are unhelpful or unsupportive.

# Ask for Specific Help

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**It's okay to ask  
for help.**



**Often people  
want to help but  
they don't know  
what you need.**

## Find Respite

- In-home care
- Adult day care programs
- Short-term stay at nursing homes, assisted living, or memory care
- Friends, neighbors, and family





## 4. Physical Well-Being

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# Take Care of Your Body Every Day

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- Exercise (even if it's a very little bit)
- Don't skip sleep to get things done.
- Eat well. Don't skip out on meals.
- Snuggle with your pet.
- Have some time each day with no electronics.



# Your Appointments Are Just as Important

- Dental care
- Annual physicals
- Eye exams
- Therapy
- Hair salon



# 5. Building Coping Skills

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# Make A Self-Care Plan

What will I remind myself I feel too busy or guilty taking care of myself?

Who can I call on when I need help?

How can I hold myself accountable?

What is one quick thing I can do to feel calm?

Strengthen Your  
Parasympathetic  
Nervous System

or

Learn to Relax.





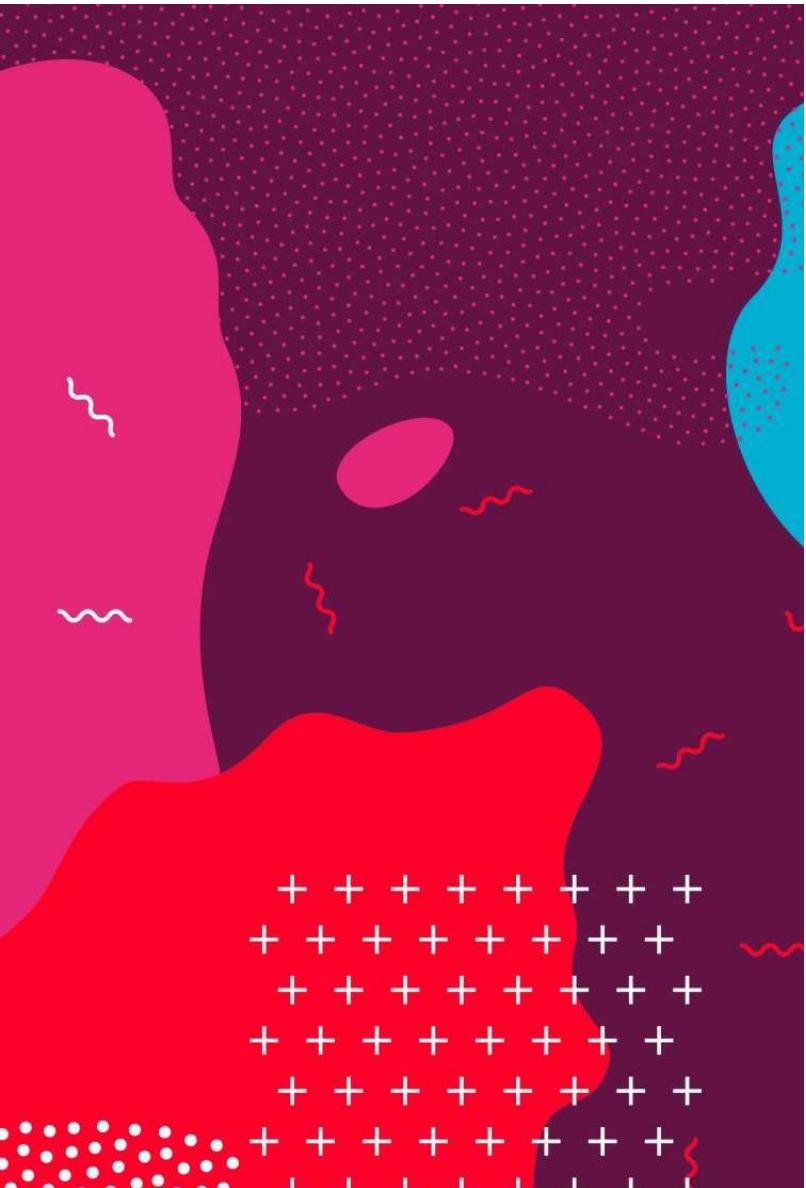
Idea: Henck van Bilsen, "Socks of doom"

## Practice Mindfulness

Take time to focus on what you are sensing and feeling in the moment without judgement.

- Deep breathing
- Body scan meditation
- Walking or sitting meditation
- Pay attention to your senses
- Treat yourself how you would treat a good friend

# Grounding Exercise



**“I think it is cruel to expect the constant presence of any one family member. Just as we have to breathe in and out, people have to ‘recharge their batteries’ outside of the sickroom at times, live a normal life from time to time; we cannot function efficiently in the constant awareness of the illness.”**

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**DR. ELISABETH KUBLER-ROSS**

# What helps you be resilient as a caregiver?

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# Additional Resources

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- [TraumaStewardship.com: map-for-managing-ones-day.pdf \(traumastewardship.com\)](http://traumastewardship.com: map-for-managing-ones-day.pdf)
- Caregiving Kinetics: [Downloadable Resources for Caregivers | Caregiving Kinetics](#)
- [Virginia Dementia Road Map: A Guide for People Impacted by Dementia](#)
- [Virginia Lifespan Respite Voucher Program](#)
- RAFT Dementia Support Program
- [ElderLink | Family Services](#)
- [Home - Loudoun Volunteer Caregivers](#)

# RAFT Dementia Support Services

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**Online Form:**  
[www.raftnorthernvirginia.org](http://www.raftnorthernvirginia.org)



**Or contact Sydney Palinkas**

[spalinkas@arlingtonva.us](mailto:spalinkas@arlingtonva.us)

703-814-2701

# THANK YOU

PLEASE REACH OUT  
WITH ANY  
ADDITIONAL  
QUESTIONS!

[RAFTDEMENTIA@ARLINGTONVA.US](mailto:RAFTDEMENTIA@ARLINGTONVA.US)