



Caregiver Self-Care and Resilience

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RAFT DEMENTIA EDUCATION AND OUTREACH COORDINATOR

The RAFT Clinical Support Program

- 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

65 years +

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

Serious mental illness diagnosis or dementia with challenging behaviors

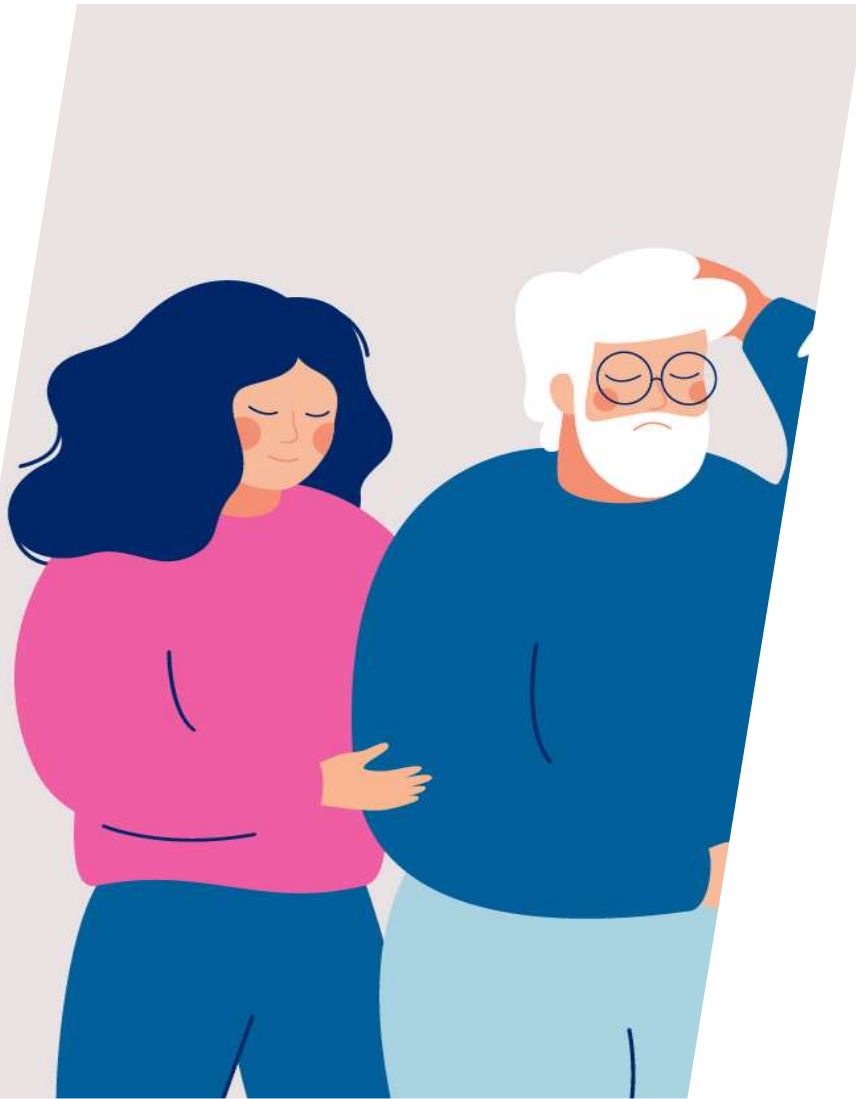
Risk of psychiatric hospitalization or currently psychiatrically hospitalized

Requires treatment not otherwise available to manage illness

The RAFT Dementia Support Program

- 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

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

55 years and older

Diagnosis of dementia or exhibiting
symptoms of dementia

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

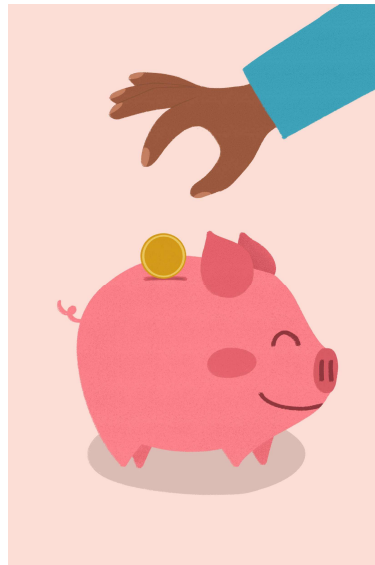
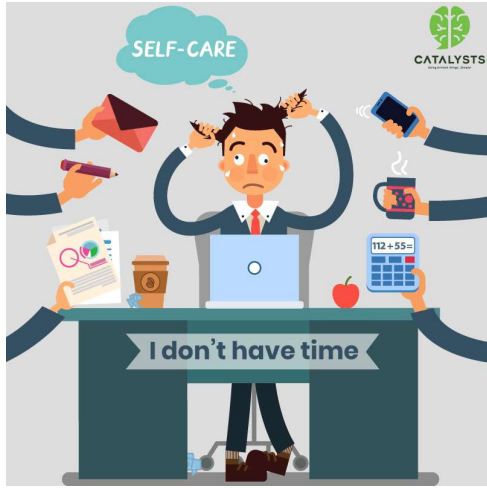
spalinkas@arlingtonva.us

703-814-2701

RAFT also offers...

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

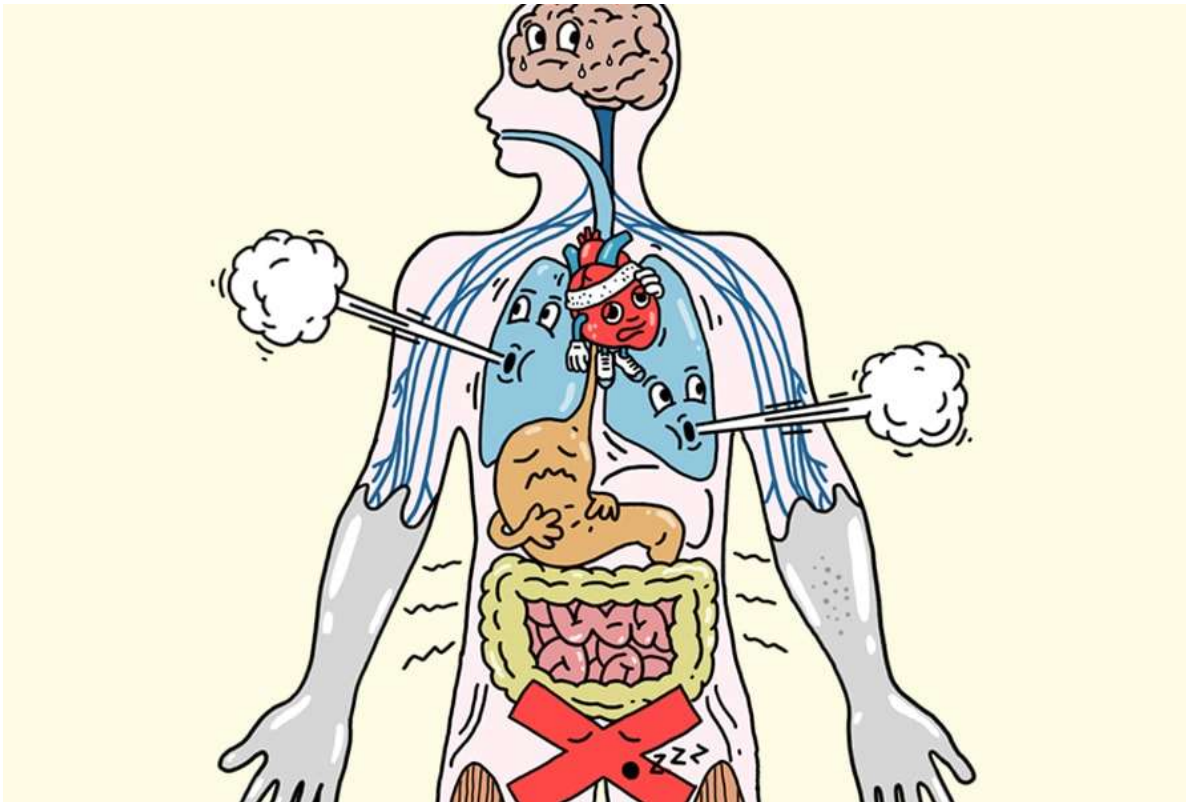




Common Struggles Faced by Caregivers

- 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?

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



Resilience

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



Don't Feel Guilty

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

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



I. Knowledge & Acceptance

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

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

- 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.

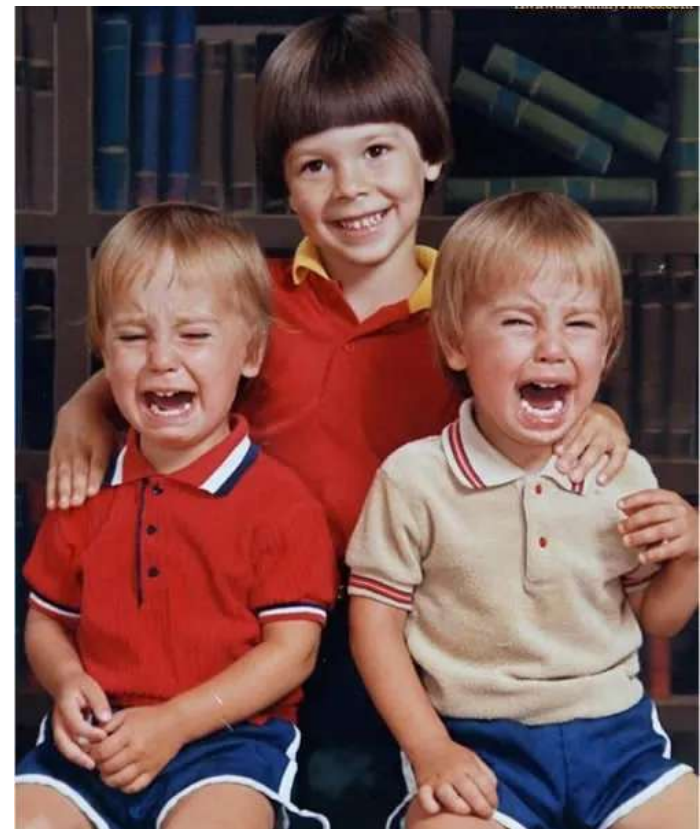
You cannot ever be perfect.

**“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...





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



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

It Takes A Village

- 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

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

Take Care of Your Body Every Day

- 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.

A close-up photograph of a red pushpin pinned to a calendar grid. The calendar is light blue with white numbers and lines. The pushpin is positioned over the number 12. The background is slightly blurred, showing other numbers like 5, 6, 13, 19, and 27.

Your Appointments Are Just as Important

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



5. Building Coping Skills

Make A Self-Care Plan



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

A central illustration of a woman with dark hair, wearing an orange sweater and dark pants, sitting in a meditative lotus position with her eyes closed. She is surrounded by a collage of various objects and symbols: a laptop, a clock, a calendar, a book, a plant, a globe, a heart, a cat, a dumbbell, a cloud, a sun, and various geometric shapes like triangles and squares. The background is a muted grey with a subtle pattern of these shapes.

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.”

DR. ELISABETH KUBLER-ROSS

What helps you be resilient as a caregiver?

Additional Resources

- [TraumaStewardship.com: map-for-managing-ones-day.pdf \(traumastewardship.com\)](https://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



Online Form:

www.raftnorthernvirginia.org



Or contact Sydney Palinkas

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THANK YOU

PLEASE REACH OUT
WITH ANY
ADDITIONAL
QUESTIONS!

RAFTDEMENTIA@ARLINGTONVA.US