**Timeless Tea Talks: August 2023 Edition**

**Care Partner Club Forum**

**Topic: “Caregiver (Care Partner) Strain**

**Quick Reference**

**Short Summaries of 4 Resources**

*Transcript available separately*

**Resource #1**

**Webinar: “Who Cares for the Caregiver” [59:13]**

**Presented by Dr. Lamica Armstead in partnership with Mental Health America**

**Overview of Ideas Shared:**

Caregiver statistics and creating space for self-care, joy, help, and reflection.

**Here are some caregiving statistics in the United States:**

* + majority of caregivers are women
  + many caregivers are over the age of 50 and may be facing their own health issues
  + there are over 1 million people aged 18 to 20 years old who are currently caring for older adults, or as of 2020 they were
  + 70% of caregivers do not see their doctor regularly and they may find it difficult to find and practice self-care.
  + One out of four caregivers report diminished family relationships as a result of caregiving
  + 24% of caregivers are caring for more than one person.

There was a **poll** done during the webinar and the participants were asked “how confident are you and asking for help as a caregiver?”

* + 59% or somewhat comfortable asking for help only when they needed it
  + 27% we’re not comfortable asking for help at all and
  + 14% said they were comfortable asking for help

**Four areas of making SPACE**

Space is an acronym that stands for Seeking Peace Amid Challenging Environments

1. **Self care:** Be intentional about your self care plan it, ask for it, and know that it’s not selfish.
2. **Joy:** Laughter is the best medicine. Find joy wherever you can!
3. **Help:** We think we can do it all as caregivers. Don’t deny someone else a chance to be a blessing in someone’s life. Let them have their chance to be needed.
4. **Reflection:** Pause and set aside time the more reflective you are the more effective. You can be celebrate your successes. You’re doing a great job and you are doing the best you can!

**Resource #2:**

**Podcast “Daughterhood: The Podcast for Caregivers**

**Episodes 30 minutes -1 hour long**

1. Really easy to listen to and informative.
2. Mentions many resources that I ended up learning about when I was taking care of my mom and as my time as a caregiver.

The first episode is “Wills, Trust, and Medicaid, oh my other!

Discusses the importance of consulting an elder law attorney for issues, dealing with Medicaid Medicare, and other important legal matters.

The second episode was called “Hospice, Don’t be afraid” and this episode talked about what hospice is and what it isn’t.

**Resource #3:**

**Article/PDF (11 pages, about a 20-25 minute read)**

**“Caregiver stress and Burn-out” written by Melinda Smith, MA**

Common signs and symptoms of caregiver stress and burnout in this document- you may want to check them out.

Ways to cope with caregiver stress and burn out:

* Feel empowered, to practice acceptance, focus on what’s in your control, and celebrate the small victories.
* Get the appreciation you need Maybe the person you’re caring for can’t express it anymore but imagine if they were healthy again, what would they say to you? Don’t forget to applaud your own efforts and give yourself a pat on the back- you’re doing a great job.
* Ask for caregiving help. Melinda shares an idea to set up a regular check in with a family member, friend, church, member, or someone at the senior center who can check in with you once a week tp get updates and help coordinate care needs and respite with anybody involved in the persons care.
* Give yourself a break you need to be able to recharge your batteries. Prioritize the activities that bring you enjoyment, find ways to laugh, even get out of the house for a minute.
* Take care of your own health.
* Join a caregiver support group. You’ll be able to share stories and hear other peoples stories. You won’t feel alone and you’ll find support in ways you may not know you needed.

**Resource #4**

**TED Talk: “Caring for the Caregivers” - Francis Lewis**

**Overall theme: The Spouse-Caregiver Journey**

**Four ways illness jumps into the spouse caregivers world:**

* 25 to 35% of spouse caregivers become clinically depressed or anxious despite the type of illness their loved one is experiencing
* Their entire assumptive role is shattered and challenged
* They don’t know how to act anymore because the old ways of being a partner are not working any longer.
* This happens in happy marriages, it happens everywhere, and marital tension escalates.

**Three myths and facts for caregiving**

* Myth and Fact 1: feelings are easily contained in an individual and are not contagious. The fact: in a relationship with a serious illness caregivers do you have feelings that play into each other.
* Myth and Fact 2: all you need is a happy marriage, that will get you through the illness. Fact: you do need more than a happy marriage to get through a serious medical illness.
* Myth and Fact 3: the spouse should swallow their feelings, and forget about themselves. The fact: the evidence shows that swallowing feelings increases stress lowers natural immunity and has other negative physical consequences.

**How do you step forward as a caregiver to thrive not just survive?**

Two main ideas:

* **Take care of yourself**
* **Add to your toolbox**
  + Be an attentive listener with a person who is living with a serious illness. Be a love sponge. If you’re fully present in somebody’s life and you’re listening to them, it’s healing. If you’re really actively listening, it is so good. It makes a person feel loved.
  + Learn and use open ended questions, so those are basically any question that you asked someone where they can’t give a yes or no answer to. Maybe they aren’t being completely forthcoming with information about how they’re feeling, but if you ask those open ended questions, then you’re able to invite the full story and to help them heal.