

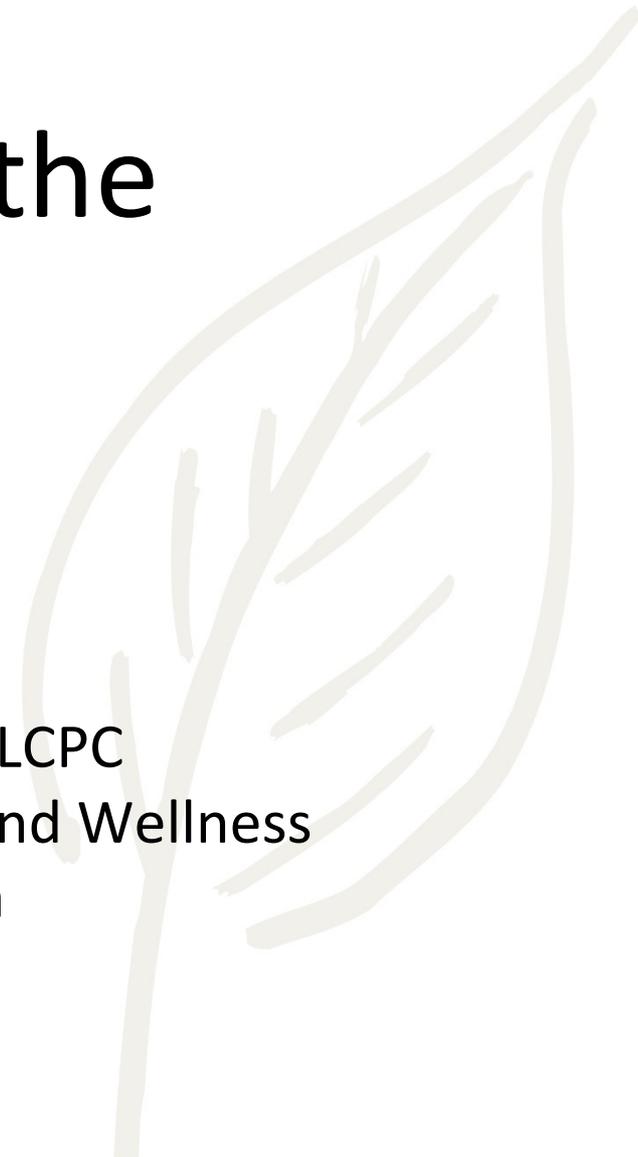
# Self-care for the Caregiver

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[www.fvinstitute.com](http://www.fvinstitute.com)



**14%** of family caregivers care for a special needs child with an estimated **16.8 million caring for special needs children** under 18 years old.

National Alliance for Caregiving in  
collaboration with AARP

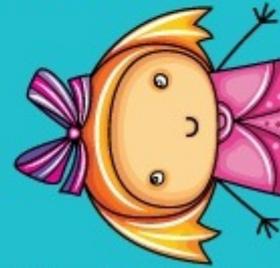
Nov 2009

Nearly 72% of family caregivers report not going to the doctor as often as they should and 55% say they skip doctor appointments for themselves. 63% of caregivers report poor eating habits and 58% indicate worse exercise habits than before caregiving responsibilities.

***National Alliance for Caregiving and Evercare 2006***



Sometimes the one  
who has been there  
for everyone else  
needs someone to  
be there for them.



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# Why Care for Yourself?

Stress – Too often and too long can result in negative effects:

headaches, upset stomach, back pain, trouble sleeping, weakened immune system, can make you moody, tense, you may be depressed

have trouble concentrating, feeling tired, have increased irritability

may neglect responsibilities, have new or worsening health problems

# Barriers to Getting Help

It means I resent my work as caregiver and I am evading my responsibility

Others won't be able to manage my child

If I get help it means I am an inadequate parent

Am I being selfish if I tend to my needs?

# You Can Learn To Manage Stress

## Identify and Accept Your Feelings:

**Grief** – unfulfilled dreams, yours and your child's, dreams of a healthy future

**Anger** - at your child, even though you know it is irrational or at others who don't offer to help, at God, or at the world in general

# Identify and Accept Your Feelings

**Worry** - what if something happens to me?

how will I handle additional responsibilities as everyone ages?

I worry about the finances

**Guilt** – that you are not doing enough

that you are not having enough patience

that you could be a better caregiver

# Signs of Caregiver Burnout

**We retreat.**

Things that used to energize us now cause us to only want to withdraw.

We become increasingly hostile

And maybe depressed

**WHY?**

We tend to ignore constant and progressive stress  
We feel we must persevere in “overload” to keep up  
with the caregiving demands

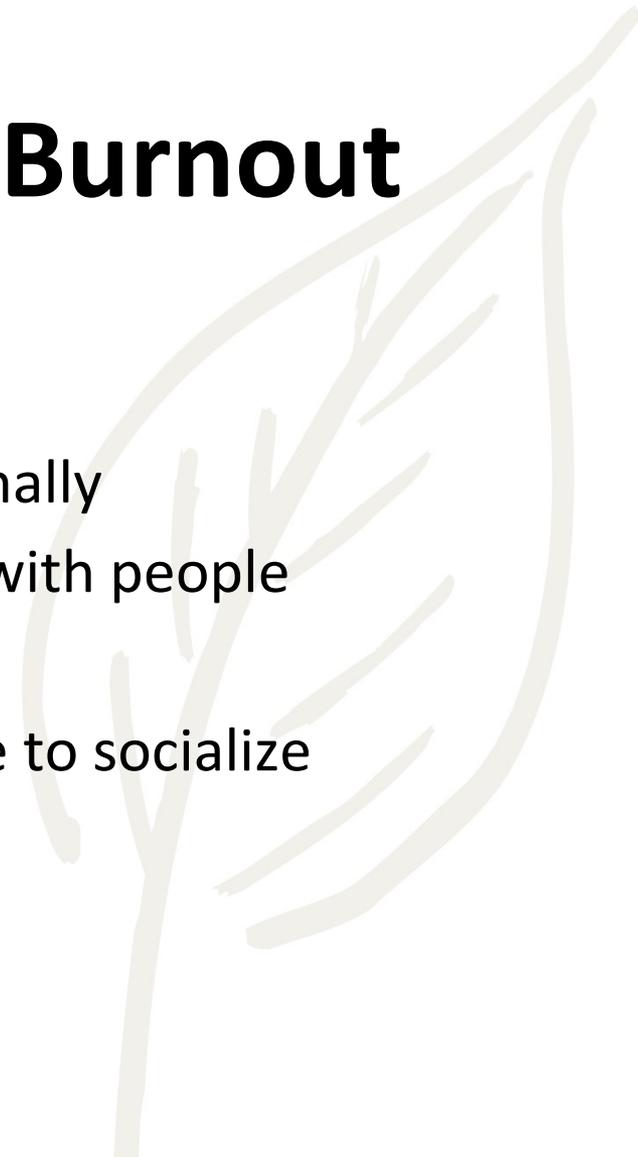
# Additional Signs of Burnout

We feel drained emotionally

It becomes difficult to deal with people

We may overreact

We may have a decreased desire to socialize



# The Vanderbilt University Study

Mothers gaining coping skills

One group focused on:

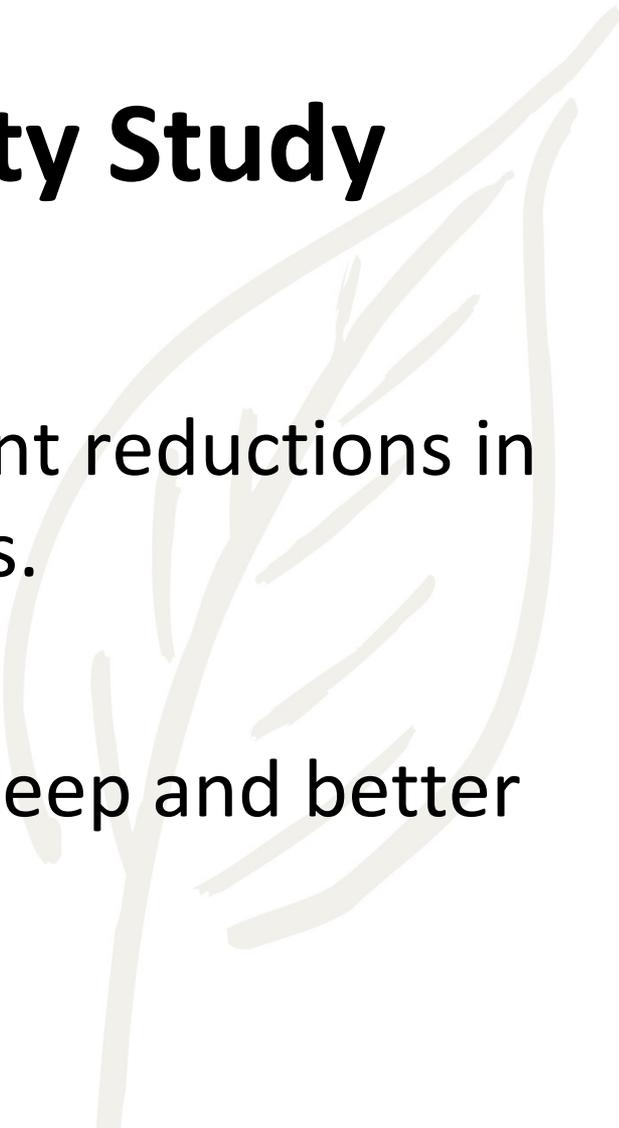
meditation, breathing exercises, and mind/body practices (yoga)

One group focused on:

positive psychology, focusing on the positive aspects of their lives

Course lasted 6 weeks, researchers followed the progress over 6 months afterward.

# Vanderbilt University Study

- Both programs led to significant reductions in depression, anxiety, and stress.
  - Mothers reported improved sleep and better satisfaction with life.
- 

“When you take time to replenish your spirit, it allows you to serve others from the overflow. You cannot serve from an empty vessel.”

*Eleanor Brown*



# **6 Secrets of a Well-Balanced Caregiver**



# Stay Connected

Avoid Isolation – closeness and emotional intensity have positive effects on feeling nurtured and important

Join a support group

Vanderbilt University study – resulted in significant reductions in depression, anxiety, and stress, improved sleep and satisfaction

Hired mothers of kids with autism to act as peer-mentors who shared the coping skills they learned to other moms in their situation

# Stay Connected

“Parents naturally trust other people who have been in their shoes, who know where they are coming from and can speak from experience,”

*Dr. Paulo Wang,  
senior vice president for Autism Speaks*

# Ask For Help

## Be Specific

Can I help? “YES, could you watch my things while I take my son to the bathroom?”

Practice what you will say “YES could you cover car pool while I take Joey to physical therapy?”

“YES could you pick these items up at the grocery store?”

Or maybe your brother is good at Internet Research and your sister is a financial whiz.

# Ask For Help

Post your needs on your personal social media page or register on a caregiver website. This allows you to create a list of your needs.

Ex. dinner twice a week, lawn mowed once a week, a companion for hospital trips...

Friends and family members can then best fit these to their skills and schedules

## Wisdom Of The Ages

*“Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!”*

*Ecclesiastes 4: 9-10*

# Pace Yourself

## **Create quiet times**

Take your own book to read at the doctor's office

Listen to music while you wait

While Joey is at his appointment sit in a quiet corner

Put perfume on and take in the aroma

## **BREATHE 4-2-8**

Talk with a friend

Come up with a solution

Take action

# Physical Needs

## **Health**

Take naps

Go to your dentist appointment

## **Exercise**

Even if for 10 minutes

Take the stairs

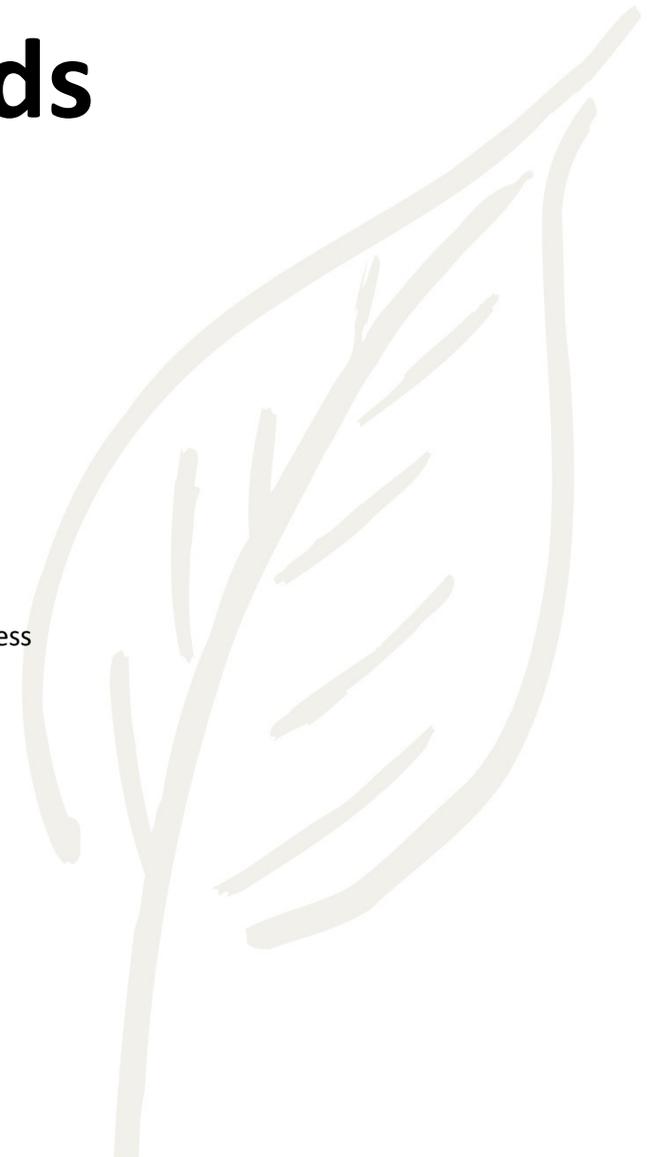
Park farther away from the door

## **Eat Nutritious Food**

Limit sugar and caffeine

Increase healthy food and water

You will be better prepared to cope with stress



# Nurture Yourself

Express Your Feelings

Seek safe People or Professionals

Ask if this is a good time

Give yourself permission to say,

“I would really love it if I could tell you how I really feel and have you listen. You don’t need to comment, just listen.

Do you think you could do that?”

# Nurture Yourself

## Eliminate Toxic Influences

Grandparents: “Why don’t you just make him behave?”

Caregiver: “I don’t want to talk about this right now  
but this would help me.”

It’s OK to say No – “I just can’t possibly do that.”

And it’s OK to say Yes and delegate to others

## Capture the Blessings

Start a Gratitude Journal

“Strive to do your best but forgive yourself  
for not doing the impossible.”

*Dr. Gearing*

Laugh any chance you get and  
cry when you need to.

# Have Fun



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