Caregiver Connections
An Educational Webinar Series With The Experts

The presentation will begin shortly.
Thank you for your patience!

dukefamilySupport.org
919-660-7510
INNOVATIVE TOOLS AND STRATEGIES TO REDUCE STRESS EXPERIENCED BY PEOPLE LIVING WITH DEMENTIA

Presented by Melissa Harris, PhD, RN
Postdoctoral Research Fellow

Duke University School of Nursing
National Clinician Scholars Program
MY BACKGROUND

- Geriatric-psych nurse
- Nurse researcher focused on dementia care
- Distanced caregiver
TOPICS TO REVIEW

- Concept of stress and why it's important
- Stress experienced by people living with dementia and their caregivers
- Strategies to reduce stress
- Tools to reduce stress
- Wrap up
- Links to stress management tools
Stress is how our body and mind react to what is happening around us.

Stress is a continuum.

Stress vs. distress.

Image from The American Institute of Stress https://www.stress.org/daily-life
WHY CARE ABOUT STRESS?

- We all have it
- It impacts our:
  - Health (short and long-term)
  - Relationships
  - Ability to care for others
- Pandemic compounded stress we already had

There are ways to reduce stress
STRESS THRESHOLD

From Smith et al. (2004)

Stress Threshold

Perception of stress

Distress

Anxious

Calm
STRESS THRESHOLD IN DEMENTIA

Distress
Anxious
Decreased stress threshold
Heightened perception of stress
Calm

Distress
Anxious

Decreased stress threshold

Image adapted from Smith et al. (2004)
Caregiver stress is linked to the person with dementia’s stress.

Health effects caused by stress are linked.
STRESS MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES AND TOOLS

Strategies = Things you can **do** to reduce stress

Tools = Things you can **use** to help you reduce stress

Both are important for the caregiver **and** the person with dementia
STRATEGIES

- **Identify**: Identify your primary stressor(s)
- **Drop**: Drop the stressors that you can
- **Modify**: Modify the stressors that you can’t drop
- **Accept**: Accept the stressors you cannot change
DROP THE STRESSORS THAT YOU CAN

- Practice and take pride in saying no
- Take things off your to do list
- Delegate to others when possible
- Avoid stressful situations (or people)
- Give yourself grace
MODIFY STRESSORS THAT YOU CANNOT DROP

- Reduce or reallocate time spent on stressful tasks
- Identify your “prime” time of day, do the most stressful tasks then
- Identify your “stress free” time
- Alter your routine if necessary
Recognize not everything is in your control

Add new activities and habits to compensate

- Stretching/yoga/tai chi/walking
- Deep breathing
- Meditation
- Prayer
- Do at least 1 activity a day that:
  - Fulfills you
  - Brings you joy
  - Relaxes you
- Schedule daily naps and/or “alone time”
- Schedule social activities
OTHER STRATEGIES FOR PERSON WITH DEMENTIA

- Maintain a daily routine
- Incorporate physical activity and more rest breaks
- Find creative ways to “engage with life”
- Lower environmental stimulation
  - Dim the lights
  - Lower the volume
  - Limit exposure to unfamiliar environments
  - Limit number of people
  - Limit number of activities
TOOLS

- Dementia friendly music devices
- Activity aprons and busy boards
- Weighted blankets
- Bright light therapy
- Acupressure and massage tools
- Aromatherapy
- Animatronic pets and baby dolls
- Guided journals
Music is one of the most beneficial strategies to reduce stress among people with dementia. Simply designed
- 1-2 buttons
- One time setup
- Looks like a radio
- Durable

DEMENTIA-FRIENDLY MUSIC DEVICES
ACTIVITY APRONS AND BUSY BOARDS

- Stimulates the senses
- Provides entertainment and distraction
- Can promote relaxation and engagement, reduce anxiety
WEIGHTED BLANKETS AND GARMENTS

- Weigh between 10-12 pounds
- Easy to use
- Feels “like a gentle hug”
- Can be used during the day or overnight
BRIGHT LIGHT THERAPY DEVICES

- Mimics natural light from the sun
- Used during the day
- Helps regulate sleep-wake cycle
- Reduces daytime fatigue and improves overnight sleep
ACUPRESSURE AND MASSAGE TOOLS

- Applies direct stimulation to “acupoints”
- Less invasive than needle acupuncture
- Can reduce stress and pain
Use of plant oils and fragrances to improve emotional and physical well-being

- Lavender – Sleep and relaxation
- Sweet orange – Anxiety
- Peppermint oil – Headache
- Ginger - Nausea
SOCIAL ROBOT PETS AND BABY DOLLS

- Highly accepted by people with dementia and their caregivers
- Provide social engagement, joy, comfort, and reduce anxiety
GUIDED JOURNALS

Self-Care for Caregivers
A 60-DAY ACCOUNTABILITY JOURNAL

MEMORIES
A KEEPSAKE BOOK FOR MY FAMILY

CAREGIVER to CAREGIVER
A Scripture-Focused Guided Reflection Journal
Mindfulness tools

Provide an anchor to current situation/reality

Stimulate the senses and provide meaningful engagement

SAFE!

Don’t require a prescription

Easy to use

Widely available

Mind Full, or Mindful?
Stress management is like a puzzle
There is no magic pill, not one size fits all
Multiple strategies are likely needed
Tools and strategies used to complement medical management and emotional/social supports (not replace!)
Person with dementia and caregiver each have their own "puzzle" to solve
COMMENTS OR QUESTIONS?

Thank you for your time and attention!
Simple music devices


Activity aprons and busy boards

- [https://www.amazon.com/s?k=busy+boards+dementia&ref=nb_sbnoss_2](https://www.amazon.com/s?k=busy+boards+dementia&ref=nb_sbnoss_2)
Weighted blankets

- https://www.amazon.com/s?k=weighted+blankets&ref=nb_sb_noss_2

Bright light therapy

- https://www.amazon.com/Therapy-Adjustable-Brightness-Function-Rotatable/dp/B08HV89TVQ/ref=sr_1_1?keywords=bright+light+therapy&qid=1639315741&sr=8-1
- https://www.amazon.com/Miracle-Morning-Replaces-Natural-Energy/dp/B01KZB295C/ref=sr_1_6?keywords=bright+light+therapy+bulbs&qid=1639315809&sr=8-6
LINKS TO PRODUCTS

- **Acupressure and massage tools**
  - [https://www.amazon.com/s?k=acupressure+mat&ref=nb_sb_noss_2](https://www.amazon.com/s?k=acupressure+mat&ref=nb_sb_noss_2)

- **Aromatherapy**
  - [https://www.amazon.com/Neck-Shoulder-Wrap-Penetrating-Aromatherapy/dp/B07KKHCGPZ/ref=sr_1_18_sspa?keywords=aromatherapy&qid=1639316996&sr=8-18-spons&psc=1&spLa=ZW5jcnlwdGVkUXVhbGlmaWVyPUFRUUVVVoOVVpKVU0mZW5jcnlwdGVkSWQ9QTAyMDUzODMyUjVFUkhBTTdQSI茹YW3J5cHRlZEFkSWQ9QTA4MzMzMEITTEICOFRJNEINJndpZGdldE5hbWU9c3BfbXRmJmFjdGlvbj1jbGlja1JIZGlzZWN0JmRvTm90TG9nQ2xpY2s9dHJ1ZQ==](https://www.amazon.com/Neck-Shoulder-Wrap-Penetrating-Aromatherapy/dp/B07KKHCGPZ/ref=sr_1_18_sspa?keywords=aromatherapy&qid=1639316996&sr=8-18-spons&psc=1&spLa=ZW5jcnlwdGVkUXVhbGlmaWVyPUFRUUVVVoOVVpKVU0mZW5jcnlwdGVkSWQ9QTAyMDUzODMyUjVFUkhBTTdQSI茹YW3J5cHRlZEFkSWQ9QTA4MzMzMEITTEICOFRJNEINJndpZGdldE5hbWU9c3BfbXRmJmFjdGlvbj1jbGlja1JIZGlzZWN0JmRvTm90TG9nQ2xpY2s9dHJ1ZQ==)
  - [https://www.amazon.com/Bedtime-Essential-Oil-Shower-Steamer/dp/B08FDCLXNP/ref=sr_1_10?keywords=aromatherapy&qid=1639316996&sr=8-10](https://www.amazon.com/Bedtime-Essential-Oil-Shower-Steamer/dp/B08FDCLXNP/ref=sr_1_10?keywords=aromatherapy&qid=1639316996&sr=8-10)
- Animatronic pets and baby dolls
  - [https://www.alzstore.com/alzheimers-baby-doll-therapy-kaylap/0530.htm](https://www.alzstore.com/alzheimers-baby-doll-therapy-kaylap/0530.htm)

- Guided journals
  - [https://www.amazon.com/s?k=guided+caregiver+journal&ref=nb_sb_noss](https://www.amazon.com/s?k=guided+caregiver+journal&ref=nb_sb_noss)
Caregiver Connections
An Educational Webinar Series With The Experts

Thank you for joining us today!

dukefamilysupport.org
919-660-7510