



PSYCHOEDUCATIONAL INTERVENTIONS FOR FAMILY CAREGIVERS OF SENIORS ACROSS THEIR LIFE TRAJECTORY:

An evidence-based research program to inform clinical practice

by **Ducharme, F.** in *Advances in Geriatrics* (2014)
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Caregiving for the elderly, especially those experiencing declining physical or cognitive functioning, can have a significant impact on the health of family caregivers. In this article, it is posited that caregivers have specific needs at different periods of their caregiving journey, requiring correspondingly suitable intervention programmes. Three psychoeducational intervention programmes, developed with family caregivers and empirically tested by the University of Montreal, Canada, over a period of 15 years, are presented.

THE LEARNING TO BECOME A FAMILY CAREGIVER PROGRAMME

An early intervention programme that identifies and imparts knowledge/skills to help people adapt to their caregiver role.

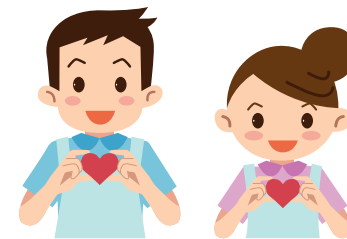
- Session 1:** Explores beliefs about the diagnosis, causes of illness, treatment, discusses and clarifies what is known/unknown about the disease;
- Session 2:** Addresses problems that may surface and offers coping strategies to prevent psychological distress;
- Session 3:** Helps caregivers learn to interpret their relative's difficult behaviours as a result of illness rather than ill intent, encourages effective communication and pleasant exchanges;
- Session 4:** Explores care aspects that can be successfully provided, improving care skills for relatives and encouraging participation in enjoyable activities that are within their capacity;
- Session 5:** Aids caregivers in seeking help from family and friends, outlining help-seeking processes;

- Session 6:** Explores available resources, using them and planning for the future;
- Session 7:** Reviews learnings from the six sessions, underlines caregivers' strengths, and demonstrates how skills learned can be used in other difficult situations.

COPING AT HOME WITH DAILY STRESSORS: A STRESS MANAGEMENT INTERVENTION

An innovative programme which aims to modify perceived stress, improve coping strategies and promote the caregiver's quality of life. The programme can be delivered in two modes: Individual face-to-face intervention or via e-learning with an online professional coach.

- Session 1:** Caregivers share their caregiving experiences and understand the effects of stress on their health;
- Session 2:** Specific stressors are selected and stress management processes are applied;
- Session 3:** Personal, family and environmental factors which influence perceptions of the selected stressor are analysed;
- Session 4:** Different coping strategies (problem solving, reframing and seeking social support) for the selected stressor, in context of family and available resources, are explored;
- Session 5:** Examines if the objective has been reached, evaluates new perception of stress; and
- Session 6:** Follow-up to review and answer questions, discuss potential transfer of learning to other stressful situations.



WHEN PLACEMENT IN LONG-TERM CARE IS INEVITABLE: THE TAKING CARE OF MYSELF PROGRAMME

A programme which addresses the mental health needs of family caregivers of institutionalised elderly relatives. Through weekly sessions, groups of six to eight use a participatory approach (i.e., discussions, written exercises between sessions and role playing), to better understand this phase of caregiving.

- Session 1:** Getting to know each other and facilitating exchanges among caregivers;
- Session 2:** Improving caregiver's perception about the impact of illness on their relative's behaviour, and finding ways to improve communication;
- Sessions 3 and 4:** Enhancing caregiver's ability to communicate their point of view to staff;
- Sessions 5 and 6:** Using strategies to mitigate emotional turmoil (e.g., reframing a difficult situation);
- Sessions 7 and 8:** Dealing with small losses on a daily basis and preparing for the eventual loss of a relative;
- Session 9:** Increasing caregiver's confidence in reorganising their life and taking care of themselves; and
- Session 10:** Extending caregiver's ability to ask for support.

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