

Positive Aspects of Family Caregiving

Overview of Teaching Strategy

The act of caregiving is known to come with physical, mental, and emotional stress. Moreover, when family members need assistance due to a disability or an illness, caregivers have varying levels of readiness or experience to step into the caregiver role. Thus, it is understandable that caregiving is often seen as overwhelming and stressful for families.

It is important for clinicians to understand that there are positive aspects of caregiving that help motivate family members to take on this important and needed role in our communities. Nurses are often important participants in the decision-making process, when individuals must decide whether to transition a family member to a nursing home or have that person remain at home, cared for by members of the family.

In efforts to help our elders age in place in their homes, it is important for nurses to be able to recognize and understand the positive aspects of caregiving. Communicating these aspects can help families see the full picture when assuming the role. This understanding also provides a mechanism for nurses to support families along the journey.

Download all files for this teaching strategy

- [Student Interview Guide for the Family \(or Informal\) Caregiver of an Older Adult](#)
- [Self-reflection: Beliefs about family caregivers](#)

Learning Objectives

Students will:

- Identify how family caregivers contribute to positive outcomes for care recipients.
- Understand the benefits family caregivers experience when caring for someone.
- Identify nursing interventions and education techniques that can positively enhance how the family caregiver experiences caregiving.

Learner Prework

Have students:

1. Complete the [self-reflection exercise](#).
2. Watch the video Understanding the Emotional Aspects of Caregiving (3 minutes):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fas1oTbXfzc>

Suggested Learning Activities

1. Student reflection: This exercise has students reflect on their perceptions of family caregiving. This should be done before the reading assignment or interviewing a caregiver. The process of reflection will help students understand their preconceived views and baseline knowledge.
 - The reflection can be used as a journal assignment, online discussion, or class discussion. However, it is best if students first have time to reflect on their answers individually before sharing with a group.
2. Watch the video and read articles listed. Review resources to provide to caregivers. Take time to familiarize yourself with these helpful websites, which are directed toward family caregivers.
 - AARP local resources and solutions for family caregiving.
<https://www.aarp.org/caregiving/local/>
 - Family Caregiver Alliance. www.caregiver.org
3. Ask the student to use the [interview guide](#) to interview a family caregiver who is visiting an elder in the hospital or nursing home, accompanying an elder in the primary care setting, or living with an elder in their community.
 - Write a log about the experience, identifying how the caregiver described positive aspects of caregiving.
4. Classroom, seminar, and/or postconference group discussion:

- After interviewing a family (informal) caregiver, did your ideas/perceptions of caregiving change? Describe the change and how it will influence your future interactions with family caregivers?
- If a family (informal) caregiver spoke to you about considering caregiving, what would you say to help weigh the benefits and challenges the caregiver may face?
- In your role as a nurse, how will you use this perspective to assist families to embrace caregiving and view the role as both positive and challenging?

Suggested Reading

Pew Research Center Social and Demographic Trends. (2015, May 21). *Caring for aging parents*. Retrieved from <https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2015/05/21/4-caring-for-aging-parents/>

Schulz, R., & Sherwood, P. R. (2008). Physical and mental health effects of family caregiving. *American Journal of Nursing, 108*(9 Suppl), 23–27. doi:10.1097/01.NAJ.0000336406.45248.4c
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2791523/?ncid=edlinkushpimg00000313>

US Department of Health & Human Services. (2014, April 1). *Informal caregiving for older Americans: An analysis of the 2011 National Study of Caregiving*. Retrieved from <https://aspe.hhs.gov/reports/informal-caregiving-older-americans-analysis-2011-national-study-caregiving>

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