

# **Caregiver Stress**

## **Prevention of Abuse & Neglect**

*T.L.C. Training*

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**Family (Informal) Caregiver** – any relative, partner, friend or neighbor who has a significant personal relationship with, and provides a broad range of assistance for, an older person or an adult with a chronic or disabling condition. These individuals may be primary or secondary caregivers and live with, or separately from, the person receiving care.

**Formal Caregiver** – a provider associated with a formal service system, whether a paid worker or a volunteer.

**Stress** - “The non specific response of the body to any demand upon it”. That means good things (i.e., job promotion, wedding) to which we must adapt to, termed Eustress AND bad things (i.e., death of loved one, loss of job), to which we must adapt to, termed Distress. Both are experienced the same way physiologically.

**Super human requests** - “Don’t take your work home with you” and “Don’t bring your personal problems to work.”

#### ***Formula of Focus:***

Vulnerability + Trigger = Emotional Incident

#### ***Relationship btw Caregiver Stress & Client Abuse/Neglect***

One does NOT cause the other, but there is a correlation between high levels of Caregiver Stress and non-repetitive abuse/neglect. Many, many Formal Caregivers experience great amounts of stress and never ever abuse or neglect the person(s) they care for. BUT, Caregiver Stress is a Vulnerability that we DO have CONTROL of. Therefore, the healthy management of Caregiver Stress is essential to decrease the likelihood of an emotional incident.

#### **A MUST HAVE:**

Your **Rain X**<sup>®</sup> - Seals the microscopic pores of glass with an invisible barrier (your own emotional armor). When adverse weather (stress) occurs, it repels what hits it, resulting in better visibility. Better visibility = better response time.

When the emotional storm hits, you have the resilience to manage it in a timely manner and return to joy riding. The things you have control over can improve your resilience, increase your threshold for emotional stress, and shield you somewhat from crisis. If/when emotional stress does hit, your **Rain X** helps you recover more completely and more quickly than you would have recovered without it.

### ***Symptoms of Caregiver Burnout***

The people most prone to burnout are caregivers. Caregivers devote themselves to care for chronically ill or disabled clients. The work involved with caregiving is often overwhelming and factors such as inadequate support, poor management and planning (in other words, poorly maintained or the absence of Rain X®), can lead to caregiver burnout. When caregiver burnout occurs, the caregiving experience is not healthy for the caregiver or the recipient.

- Powerlessness
- Hopelessness
- Emotional exhaustion
- Detachment
- Overreacting to criticism
- Inability to handle more than one problem or crisis at a time
- Isolation/escapism
- Irritability
- Frustration
- Despair
- Feeling trapped
- Cynicism
- Apathy
- Feeling tired
- Feeling sadness or doom
- Crying frequently
- Not feeling joy
- Easily angered or annoyed
- Worthless and guilty
- Change in eating habits
- Change in sleeping habits
- Back pain, headaches
- Harmful behavior to care recipient
- Panic attacks and anxiety
- Impatience
- Resentment

With these symptoms a caregiver can become depressed and lose trust in others, which leads to detachment in relationships and even could cause them to fall apart.

The symptoms of burnout can take months to surface and often are discovered by other people. If someone points out symptoms, listen before harm occurs to the recipient or you.

***Each Caregiver's Rain X®*** needs to be individualized because each Caregiver is unique and comprised of many diverse characteristics. When developing your Rain X® consider drawing from the following areas:

-Biological -Psychological -Social -Spiritual

### **Rain X® Options:**

*The demands that come along with caring for someone else are endless, and caregivers often lose focus of their own needs when putting someone else's ahead of theirs.*

*There are many tips for reducing the stress that coincides with taking care of another person.*

*Following are suggestions when personalizing your **Rain X®***

- Educate yourself about the illness of the person you are caring for. The more you know the more comfortable you will feel caring for them.
- Don't be afraid to talk about your feelings. A great way to vent is with a support group, through a counselor, or anyone you know who is willing to lend an ear.
- It's important for your health to eat right, get enough sleep, and exercise. These things will improve your mood and keep you healthy. [www.allrecipes.com](http://www.allrecipes.com)
- Relieve yourself of some of the hassles that come with balancing life and formal caregiving by setting priorities and using a date book or calendar. Planning ahead will only make things easier on you.
- Reward yourself. Participate in activities you enjoy. One of the best investments you can make is indulging in a massage. Massage therapy can relax muscles, ease muscle spasm, increase blood flow to skin and muscles and relieve mental and emotional stress. [www.sheboyganmassagetherapy.com](http://www.sheboyganmassagetherapy.com) [www.shebcomfortzone.com](http://www.shebcomfortzone.com)
- Surround yourself with positive people. Negative attitudes and moods tend to spread, so stay clear and keep a positive outlook. What if depression was contagious?
- Keep your humor; read a light-hearted book or rent a comedic video. Whenever possible try to find humor in your day to help relieve tension. Laughter helps to relax muscles, relieve pain, and boosts the immune system.
- Be social. Plan outings with friends and keep in touch frequently, this gives you someone to talk to and also surrounds you with people who have an invested interest in your feelings and well being.
- Practice relaxation techniques. Popular techniques include deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, meditation, visualization, yoga, and tai chi. [www.yogajournal.com](http://www.yogajournal.com)

**About your presenter:** Dione Gisch is an experienced licensed professional counselor and has spent the majority of her life serving young adult, adult, and senior members of her community. Her experiences include work with nursing home residents, physical medicine, rehabilitation patients, survivors of sexual



abuse, and homeless women and their children. She also has over 20 years of experience working with individuals in crisis. Dione's areas of expertise include anxiety (including PTSD/OCD & phobias), depression, grief/loss, adult survivors of sexual abuse, and chronic pain. Dione is a firm believer in the value of personal growth and the unlimited benefits it encompasses. She works collaboratively with her

clients in setting and reaching their goals, while providing a safe, genuine, therapeutic relationship.

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