

Modified Caregiver Strain Index	YES On a regular basis Score: 2	YES Sometimes Score: 1	NO Never Score: 0
My sleep is disturbed. <i>(For example: the person I care for is in and out of bed at night or wanders).</i>			
Care giving is an inconvenience. <i>(For example: helping takes so much time or it is a long drive to help).</i>			
Care giving is a physical strain. <i>(For example: lifting in and out of chair; effort and concentration is required).</i>			
Care giving is confining. <i>(For example: helping restricts my free time or I cannot go visiting).</i>			
There have been family adjustments. <i>(For example: helping has disrupted my routine; there is no privacy).</i>			
There have been changes in personal plans. <i>(For example: I had to turn down a job; I could not go on vacation).</i>			
There have been other demands on my time. <i>(For example: other family members need me).</i>			
There have been emotional adjustments. <i>(For example: severe arguments about care giving).</i>			
Some behavior is upsetting. <i>(For example: incontinence, accusing family members of taking things, trouble remembering things).</i>			
It is upsetting the person I care for has changed so much from his/her former self. <i>(For example: he/she is a different person than he/she used to be).</i>			
There have been work adjustments. <i>(For example: I have to take time off for care giving Duties).</i>			
Care giving is a financial strain.			
I feel completely overwhelmed. <i>(For example: I worry about the person I care for; I have concerns about how I will manage).</i>			
TOTALS:			

Date of Assessment:

NOTES:

Caregivers should assess themselves every six months and review scores with family and/or physicians. There is no breakdown in the scores that classify them according to levels of stress. However, a score of five or greater is indicative of needing assistance.



U.T. School of Nursing Collaboration!



This summer for the 5th year, the **House of Friends** is partnering with the **University of Texas at Austin School of Nursing**. Two students, **Debra Rodriguez, R.N. and Mary Roche, R.N.**, are participating fully in our program as an assignment for their Public Health Course. Debra and Mary are completing courses to achieve their Bachelor's degrees. In addition to their coursework, they each are employed fulltime in management nursing positions in Seton network hospitals. These busy students compiled the following caregiver articles for this newsletter.



What can Caregivers Expect?

By: *Debra Rodriguez, R.N. and Mary Roche, R.N.*

According to the **Association of Aging**, the definition of a family caregiver is a person who cares for relatives and loved ones who are frail, elderly or who have a physical or mental disability. The physical, emotional and financial toll placed on caregivers often restricts their lives and can result in caregiver strain. Unnoticed, caregiver strain increases the chance that the caregiver may develop depression or other chronic illnesses. As a result, their ability to provide effective care to their family member diminishes and the chance of early nursing home placement increases. Early nursing home placement can cause additional guilt, increased financial toll, and subsequent worsening stress of the caregiver.

Various factors influence the amount of strain placed on caregivers and identifying these factors is helpful to the caregiver. The "**Modified Caregiver Strain Index**" is a tool that measures the stress of caregiving and identifies specific areas where additional support could prevent negative health consequences and burnout of the caregiver. This index is on the back side of this page. Using the index caregivers should assess themselves every six months and review scores with their family and/or physicians.

Note from UT Nurses Debra and Mary: Numerous resources available provide tips to deal with the multiple challenges caregivers are facing. Education directed at management of specific problems is most beneficial to caregivers. Each month we will provide tips on how to address specific concerns that contribute to caregiver strain. This month's tip focuses on the caregiver and comes from the website: www.toghers.com. The title: *Taking Good Care of You!* In the next HOF Friends Connecting issue, we will present "*Tips for Wandering Behaviors*"!

Taking Good Care of YOU!

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Being a caregiver can place demands on our physical strength, energy, time, and financial & emotional resources. Remember, you have to take care of YOU to take care of someone else effectively.

- Commit yourself to daily nourishment. Eat regular meals, and have a high-protein snack when your energy wanes. Take a good multi-vitamin to be sure your nutritional needs are met.
- Schedule in, and take, regular breaks. If you are unable to remove yourself from the caregiving situation, take a few moments of quiet reflection between tasks—say a prayer, step outside to feel the sun on your face, the wind in your hair, and your feet on the earth.
- Work a crossword, anagram, or Sudoku puzzle to take your mind off your daily worries.
- Stay in touch with friends and family. Do not isolate yourself. Reach out to others who love and support you.
- Include regular physical exercise, if possible. Walking is wonderful for mind and body.
- Keep a gratitude journal; look for the gifts in each day. Observe the lessons and learning opportunities that come your way.
- Practice breathing and stretching each day. Take a yoga class. Get a yoga video you can follow at home or with your care recipient.
- Attend a caregiver support group. Share your story. Learn from others.
- Read inspirational books or sacred texts to keep things in perspective.
- Listen to beautiful music.
- Listen to inspirational tapes or CDs.
- Stay current with your financial obligations, or arrange to care for them.
- Ask for and accept help.
- Keep a list of things others can do to help you.
- Get a massage or schedule a reflexology appointment.
- Drink plenty of water and clear fluids throughout the day.
- Limit sugar, caffeine, and stimulants that decrease your energy in the end.
- End each day by counting your blessings.



Mary Roche & Debra Rodriguez at HOF.