Providing care for others and focusing on another person’s needs can be stressful on the caregiver. Caring for yourself is one of the most important things you can do as a caregiver. When your needs are taken care of, the person you care for will also benefit. This presentation will discuss how the stress experienced by caregivers, impacts the body and the long term effect stress has on caregiving. Mary T. O’Neill will provide solutions with some self-care steps that reduce personal stress, change negative self-talk, and empower caregivers. She will also review how to set goals, stay motivated, deal with feelings of anger, guilt and depression and ways to increase confidence and ability to cope with the demands of caregiving.
The Art of Self-Care for the Caregiver

Mary T. O’Neill, BCC, D.Min
Vice President of Spiritual Care & Pastoral Education
Catholic Health Services of Long Island
January 28, 2014

Self-Care of the Caregiver

• Good intentions
• Good preaching
• Are we convinced on the need for self-care?

What stress does to us

• Tensions of life
• Eu-stress
• Distress
Reactions to stressors

Fight or flee – a biological response
- Adrenalin produced for flight or fight
- When not used, where does it go?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REACTION</th>
<th>ORIGINAL NEED</th>
<th>LONG TERM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increased heart rate</td>
<td>To pump blood faster</td>
<td>High BP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faster breathing</td>
<td>Provide more oxygen</td>
<td>Chest pain from tired diaphragm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digestion stops</td>
<td>Divert blood to legs</td>
<td>Ulcers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blood leaves head, hands, feet</td>
<td>Divert blood to large muscles</td>
<td>Cold hands, feet, migraines/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased coag of blood</td>
<td>Minimize blood loss</td>
<td>Headache</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Release extra sugars into bl and insulin to break down bl</td>
<td>More energy</td>
<td>Increased risk of clots, stroke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>When blood is low we feel tired</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Listen to your body

Listen to messages you give your body:
Take moment to pay attention now
- Where are stressors? Tightness? Pain?
- Stiffness? Joint ache? Discomfort?
- What might the message be?
Most of us do not like our bodies
• We want to be like someone else
• Too tall, too short, too…

Use our bodies as metaphors for inner stresses
• Pain in the neck
• Blow my mind
• Pay through the nose
• Go to the jugular
• Long face
• Get nose out of joint
• Hair-raising experience
• Pain in the rear

Balance
• We want our outer and inner selves to be in harmony
• Paul Tillich: Dialectic of Life Processes

Life is a continual dialogue of DISCOVERY & DISCLOSURE
We can do no great things, Only small things with great love, For we are not here to save the world, But only to serve it. - Mother Teresa

LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF
LOVE YOURSELF AS YOU LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR.

GOOD CAREGIVING OF OTHERS DEMANDS
GOOD CAREGIVING OF SELF
Everyone is a house with FOUR rooms

And unless we go into every room, every day, Even if only to keep it aired, We are not a complete person.

– Rumeer Gooden

12 Self-Care Steps

Making balance an integral part of your personal and professional life.

1. Conscious Centering

- Centering helps ensure that you are in the receptive and balanced state needed to be fully present
- Helps create a peaceful atmosphere
**The Art of Self-Care for the Caregiver**

1. Dwell in the present moment, releasing all thoughts and concerns about the past as well as releasing projections into the future.
2. Conscious contracting of the muscles of the face, neck, body, and releasing with an exhale. Follow your breath.

3. Meditation relaxes body, calms mind and centers – gets beyond the “thinking” mind into a deeper awareness.
   - find place
   - breathe deeply and rhythmically
   - focus on breath, instead of thoughts
   - with distractions, continue to return to breathing
   - choose a mantra/word/phrase to occupy your mind.

4. Boundaries – appropriate emotional and physical distance that you maintain between yourself and another so that you do not become overly enmeshed, dependent or co-dependent. This is your responsibility, not your client/patient/family member.

2. Establish healthy boundaries
3. The power of prevention

- Plan and review your day
- Make time for rest, food & sufficient sleep
- Keep positive perspective
- Lack of sleep makes you less productive, less mentally sharp, and more prone to the effects of stress

4. Restorative exercise

- Physical exercise – yoga, stretching, etc.
- Stay hydrated – muscles 70% water; brain 80%
- Choose activities you love that provide exercise
5. Body Mechanics

- “It’s easier to prevent bad habits than to break them.” Ben Franklin
- Cultivate healthy habit of being mindful of your body mechanics at all times.
- Let your energy come from your core, rather than from muscular effort.
- Notice position of your head as you work on computer or at desk, or watch TV.

6. Clear communication

- Communication skills have to be developed, honed, nurtured and added to on an ongoing basis.
- Language is one of the most powerful reflections of how we think and feel about ourselves and others.
- Know your assumptions, your attitudes, your values.

7. Mindfulness

- Mindfulness helps develop a calm concentration through non-judgmental awareness.
- Allows you to be in many situations and maintain sense of equanimity.
• it is the concentrated awareness of one’s thoughts, actions or intentions. It brings a quality of attention to our experiences in the present.
• it frees us from our internal commentary so that we can observe life in the present.

8. Empowering Ethics
Ethics has to do with consistency of actions, • values, • measures, • principles, • expectations and • outcomes.

Be conversant with the Code of Professional Ethics.

9. Keep your perspective
• Perspective: how you interpret and organize sensations to produce a meaningful experience of the world.

“it is not so much what happens to you, as it is how you perceive what happens to you that matters.”

“what you leave behind is not what is engraved in stone monuments, but what is woven into the lives of others.” Pericles
There is a thought in your mind right now. The longer you hold on to it, the more you dwell upon it, the more life you give to that thought. Give it enough life, and it will become real. So make sure the thought is indeed a great one.
- Ralph Marston

How far you go in life depends on your being tender with the young, compassionate with the aged, sympathetic with the striving and tolerant of the weak and the strong – because some day you will have been all of these.
- George Washington Carver

10. Self-Care

• Are there things you preach to others that you do not practice yourself?
11. Breathe

- Proper breathing brings more oxygen to the blood and to the brain.
  1. clavicular breathing: shallowest
  2. thoracic: rib breathing – not efficient
  3. deep abdominal breathing brings air to the lowest and largest part of the lungs.
     Slow and deep, diaphragm engaged.
- Best breath combines all 3.
- “Smile, breathe & go slowly.” - Thich Nhat Hanh

12. Love & Compassion

- “Love heals through the restoration of homeostasis. The most powerful thing for the restoration of the body’s balance is love. The limbic brain establishes limbic resonance with another, and then homeostasis, which is healing, occurs.” – Deepak Chopra
- Practice self compassion and be realistic about what you can and cannot achieve within the time frame you have. Be tender with yourself.

May you gaze upon yourself
With the same care, compassion
And gentleness,
with which God gazes on you this day and every moment of every day.
Adapted from John O’Donohue
Meet the Speaker

Mary T. O’Neill, BCC, D.Min.
Vice President of Spiritual Care and Pastoral Education, Catholic Health Services of Long Island

Mary T. O’Neill has over 20 years of experience with a training Ministry students for national certification as Chaplains and spiritual care providers to patients in hospitals, residents in nursing homes and the families and staff who care for them.

Mary is a licensed Therapeutic Massage therapist and has worked many years in care for persons who are struggling with illness, disability and the diminishment of age.

For 18 years, Mary was employed as the Assistant Administrator / Director of Pastoral Services at Calvary Hospital, Bronx, NY. A specialty palliative care hospital that emphasizes care attention to the whole person. Currently she is employed by Catholic Health Services of Long Island as Vice President of Spiritual Care and Pastoral Education.