

# Understanding Caregiving



# What is caregiving?

Family caregiving for older adults is a multifaceted experience shaped by cultural, social, and family dynamics as well as government policies.

Family caregivers provide significant long-term care to their loved ones, including direct physical and emotional care, decision-making, and coordination with or supervision of other caregivers.

## Caregiver Roles

- Monitor symptoms and administer complex medication regimens.
- Assist with personal care & emotional support.
- Perform housekeeping tasks.
- Manage difficult behaviours such as aggression & hallucinations.
- Deal with healthcare providers, finances, and insurance companies.

## Potential problems faced by long-term caregivers

- Prone to mental wellness challenges such as stress, anxiety and depression.
- Poorer immune system function.
- Excessive use of tobacco and alcohol due to stress.
- Giving up exercise habits due to lack of time.
- Losing sleep.
- Reduced social interactions.
- Build-up of anger and frustration.



# What is Caregiver Burnout?

- Stems from chronic caregiver stress, resulting in complete physical, emotional and mental exhaustion.
- Whereas a person with caregiver stress may say something like “I have too much to handle”, a person who reached burnout may instead say “I’m done caring.”
- Signs of caregiver burnout :
  - Feeling sad, depressed, or hopeless
  - Loss of energy to do what used to interest them
  - Feeling resentful toward the care recipient
  - Feeling like caregiving has affected family relationships in a negative way
  - No interest in socialising with others
  - Feeling exhausted all the time
  - Lack of energy to complete daily tasks or to look after own needs

## Common Interventions

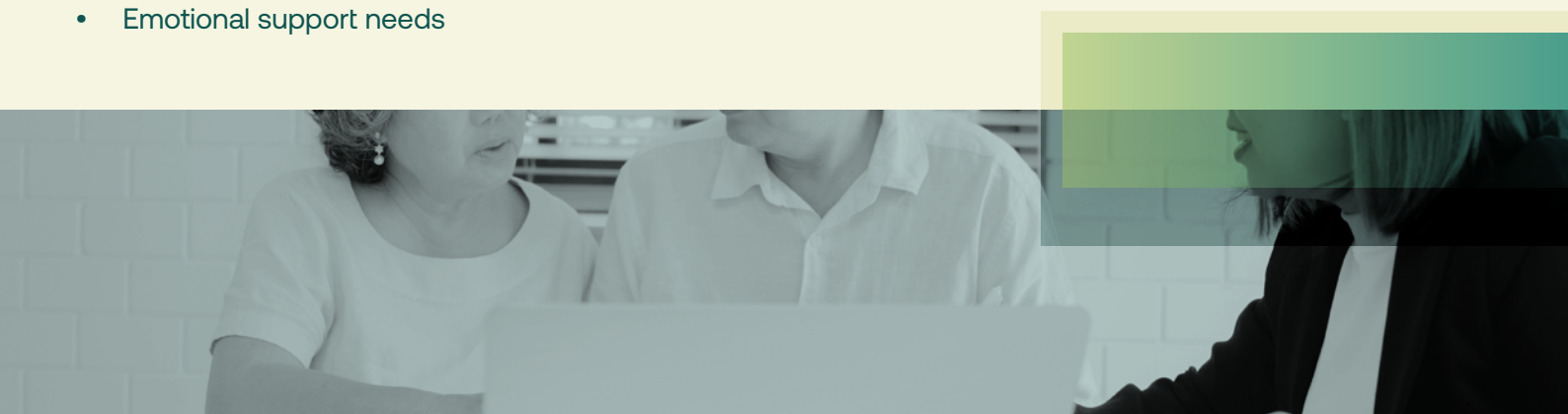
When consulting a family therapist, therapists will want to understand more about how each person in the family is affected by the current situation.

Family therapists can help to identify each member’s unique strengths and facilitate discussions to clarify each person’s caregiving role and responsibilities.

Older adults should expect to be involved in care planning. Consulting with a family therapist can result in a practical and workable care plan that is agreeable to each family member.

**Care plans should include :**

- Medical conditions
- A list of medications and frequency of doctor visits
- Physical and nutritional needs
- Emotional support needs



# 3 main types of caregiving services to consider :

## ➤ **Home Care** : provides care at the care recipient's home

- **Meals on Wheels**

- The service provides meal deliveries to homebound clients who are unable to buy and prepare their own meals and do not have a caregiver to help them to do so.

- **Medical Escort and Transport**

- The service provides transportation and/or someone to accompany clients to travel to and from their homes for medical appointments and treatments (*for example, at hospitals, specialist outpatient clinics, or polyclinics*).

- **Home Medical**

- For those who are frail and homebound, and require help with medical needs at home.

- **Home Therapy**

- Home Therapy provides home-based rehabilitation services such as physiotherapy, occupational therapy and speech therapy that support clients in recovering their functional abilities.

- **Home Nursing**

- For homebound clients and their caregivers who need assistance on nursing care at home.

- **Home Personal Care**

- For those who require personal services to continue living well at home or to help support their caregivers in caregiving duties.

- **Hospice Home Care**

- Patients with life-limiting illnesses, such as advanced dementia or cancer, and whose conditions are expected to get worse in weeks or months may choose to spend their days at home instead. In such cases, caregivers need help coping with the patient's needs.



- **Befriending Service**

- Volunteers from befriending services can help to take care of the emotional and psychological wellbeing of these old folks by helping them or listening to their problems.

➤ **Care Centres & Clinics** : places which individuals can go to in the day and return home to their families in the evening.

- **Day Care Centre**

- Provides full-day programmes for care recipients who need company and/or supervision while caregivers are at work.

- **Active Ageing Centres**

- Drop-in social and recreational spaces for those who live in nearby neighbourhoods.

- **Community Rehabilitation Centre**

- Provides speech or physiotherapy services.

- **Centre-based Nursing**

- Provides basic nursing care such as wound management or assistance with medical equipment.

- **Community Health Centres**

- Consultations with General Practitioners for care recipients with chronic illnesses.



➤ **Inpatient hospices and nursing homes** : for those who need care that cannot be provided at home.

- **Inpatient hospice palliative care service**

- For end-of-life patients who require on-premise inpatient care, terminal care or treatment.

- **Nursing homes**

- Long-term residential care facilities to help residents with their daily activities and nursing care needs.

# Who to contact for external support?

- NuLife for counselling support at **6300 8706 / 9734 1560**.
- The nearest Family Service Centre (FSC). FSCs are community-based social service providers who support individuals and families in need. You can identify the closest FSC for the person via this link: (<https://www.msf.gov.sg/our-services/directories>).
- Respective self-help groups:
  - Chinese Development Assistance Council: **6841 4889**
  - Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura: **6359 1199**
  - Singapore Indian Development Association: **1800 295 3333**
  - Eurasian Community Fund: **6447 1578**
  - Institute of Mental Health at **6389 2222** (*their 24-hour hotline*)
- Agency for Integrated Care (AIC). AIC supports caregivers and care recipients with challenges pertaining to healthcare, socioemotional and financial concerns. AIC hotline: **1800-650-6060**