

Activity – Ways to Manage Your Own Stress

The American Psychological Association offers several strategies to help those in the “sandwich generation” manage their stress. In Section 1, we address the power of journaling as a self-coaching exercise to help create positive self-talk. In managing stress, journaling can also be a very effective tool to help identify what situations or events trigger stressful feelings, how you deal (or don’t deal) with stress, and how you may manage stress.

As we discussed in Section 1, journaling requires a time commitment. Regarding using journaling to help reduce your stress, we recommend that you commit 2-3 weeks to see if you can make a difference. If you started journaling in the beginning of this course, you can easily use your same journal to manage stress.

Consider making daily entries, because what you think may be triggering your stress at this moment may really be something else the more you journal about your experiences and thinking.

You can follow your own format in journaling or use the following framework to help guide your thinking. Each part of the framework is given a “code” word to help you remember that this process is not just about focusing on the stressful situation, but also to help you identify solutions to manage that stress.

Identify stressors

- What situations or events seem to trigger stressful feelings for you?
- Are these situations or events related to:
 - Caregiving issues with children?
 - Caregiving issues with older parents?
 - With work situations?
 - With financial issues?
 - With something else?

How do you deal with stress?

- How do you usually cope with stress related to caregiving children as well as parents?
- Put things in perspective – what’s really important for you? What is it that you are wanting?
- Can you prioritize and delegate certain responsibilities of caregiving to others?
- Do you feel comfortable saying “no” to less important things?

Find healthy ways to manage your stress

- What healthy, stress-reducing activities could you do on a regular basis?
- Are you keeping in contact with friends or other relatives to keep up your socializing?

- Are you “listening to your body”? Too often we don’t listen to our body that is telling us that something is just not right.
- Are you “making time” for yourself to build up your physical as well as mental energy?
- If stress is becoming overwhelming, are you open to talking to a professional who can help you address your anxieties and better manage stress?

As you journal, keep in mind some self-coaching questions to help move your thinking and actions forward. Some examples are the following:

- When you think about stress in your caregiving situation, what is it that you are wanting? What’s most important to you?
- What are some important things that you want to consider?
- If you could find healthy ways to manage your stress, what would that look like for you?
- What do you need to get there?
- What is starting to stand out for you related to your thinking?