Caregiver,
Put Your M.A.S.K. on First!

Presented by Chou Hallegra, MA, CFTP

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Chou Hallegra

- Proud caregiver & PWD
- Mental Health Consultant certified in trauma grief, anxiety, mindfulness and more
- Licensed Trainer for Trauma-Informed Care
- Certified Trainer for Person-Centered Thinking
- Certified Supervisor of Parent Peer Support Providers
- Certified C2P2 & C2P2-EI Graduate

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Agenda

1. **Prevalence & Impact of Caregiver Stress: Why You Need A M.A.S.K.**

2. **Building Your Caregiver Survival Kit: Putting Your M.A.S.K Together**

3. **Prioritizing Your Needs As A Caregiver: How to Put Your M.A.S.K on First**

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Prevalence & Impact of Caregiver Stress

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How many of these are you currently experiencing?

- Lack of energy/fatigue
- Sleep problems (too much or too little)
- Changes in eating habits; weight loss or gain
- A feeling of hopelessness
- Withdrawing from, or losing interest in, activities you once enjoyed
- Neglecting your own physical and emotional needs
- Feeling like caregiving is controlling your life
- Becoming unusually impatient, irritable or argumentative with the person you're caring for and/or with others
- Anxiety about the future
- Depression or mood swings
- Difficulty coping with everyday things
- Headaches, stomachaches, and other physical problems

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You are not alone

- “40% to 70% of family caregivers have clinically significant symptoms of **depression**. About a quarter to half of these caregivers meet the diagnostic criteria for major depression.”

  [Zarit, S. (2006). Assessment of Family Caregivers: A Research Perspective.]

- “Caregivers whose care recipient has emotional or mental health problems are more likely than others to report a **decline in their own health** (25% versus 14%).”

  [National Alliance for Caregiving and AARP. (2015). Caregiving in the U.S.]

- “Caregivers who work full-time and are aged 45 years or less show the greatest **emotional and physical health deficit** in contrast to non-caregivers.”

  [Gallup-Healthways. (2011). Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Survey: In U.S., Caregivers’ Emotional Health Often Suffers.]

https://www.caregiver.org/resource/caregiver-statistics-health-technology-and-caregiving-resources/

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Caregiving
=
juggling

Caregiving is a constant balancing act.

The more we balance, the higher our stress level.

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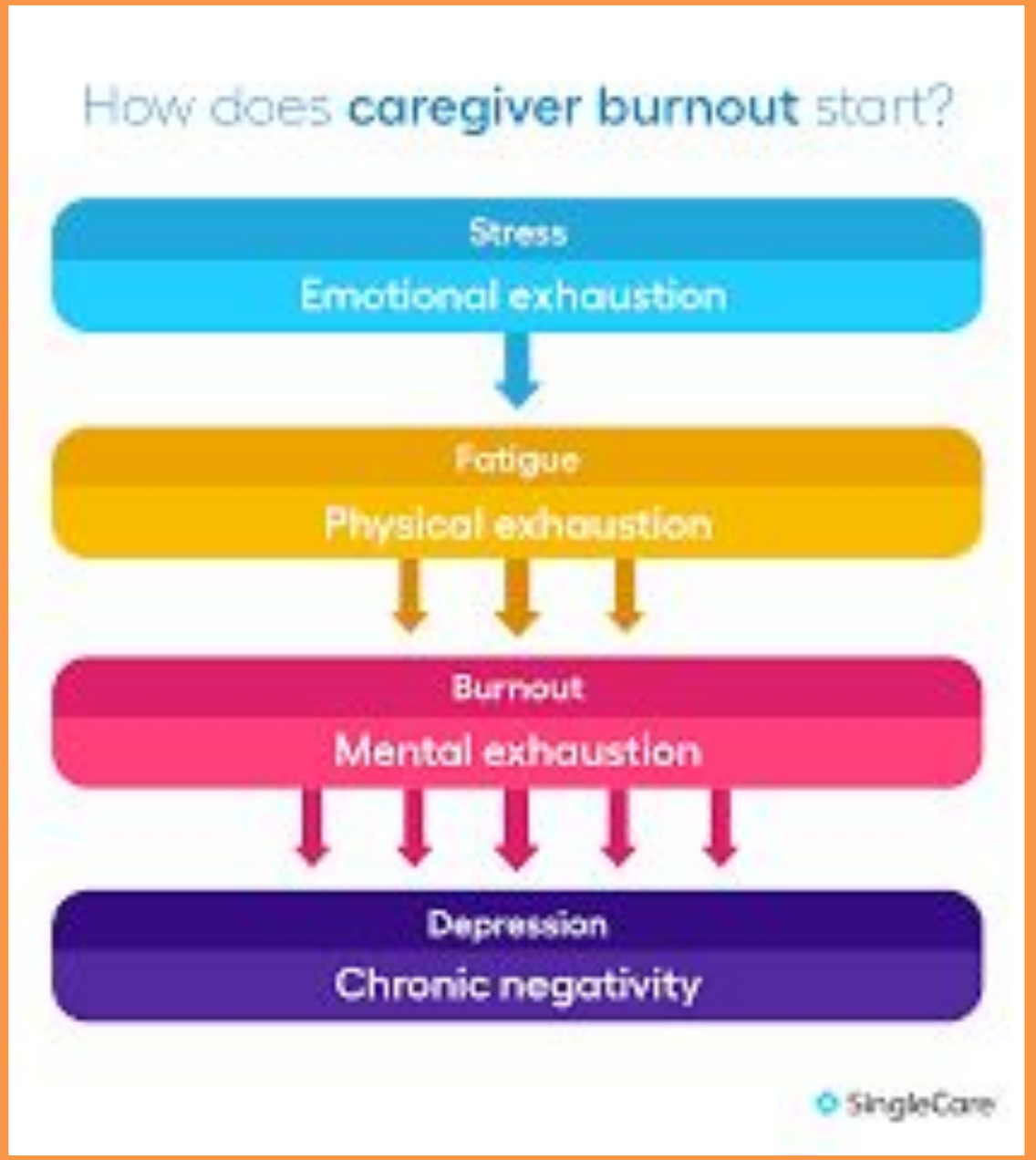
Caregiver stress can lead to a progressive decline in all areas of life.



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Signs of caregiver burnout

- Lack of energy / Overwhelming fatigue
- Sleep problems (too much or too little)
- Changes in eating habits; weight loss or gain
- A feeling of hopelessness
- Withdrawing from, or losing interest in, activities you once enjoyed
- Neglecting your own physical and emotional needs
- Feeling like caregiving is controlling your life
- Becoming unusually impatient, irritable or argumentative with the person you're caring for and/or with others
- Anxiety about the future
- Depression or mood swings
- Difficulty coping with everyday things
- Headaches, stomachaches, and other physical problems / Lowered resistance to illness

https://www.vitas.com/family-and-caregiver-support/caregiving/caregiver-life-balance/signs-of-caregiver-burnout-and-how-to-prevent-it

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You need a M.A.S.K. to protect yourself from and decrease the negative impact of caregiver stress.

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Building Your Caregiver Survival Kit

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Don’t wait for a crisis to get prepared

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Start with the end in mind

What do you **need** to **have** and **be** in order to avoid getting to a breaking point?

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Got your M.A.S.K.?

- **M**indfulness
- **A**sking for help
- **S**elf-care
- **K**indness

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Mindfulness

Noticing what is happening while it’s happening and without judgement.

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https://www.mindful.org/10-ways-to-define-mindfulness/

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Asking for help

Some of the reasons why caregivers struggle to ask for help:

- “It’s my responsability”
- Habit of giving rather than receiving help.
- Feeling like a burden.
- Thinking nobody can do “it” well.
- Worrying about having to “fix” it later.
- Shortage of help (staff/support).

We all need support…who/what can help you with some of the tasks/duties that demand your attention? What can you delegate?

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Self-care

The 4 S's of Self-Care:

- Subjective (person-centered)
- Sustainable (is this something you can maintain?)
- Supportive (aligns with something bigger that matters most to you)
- Supported (who/what is helping you make this self-care)

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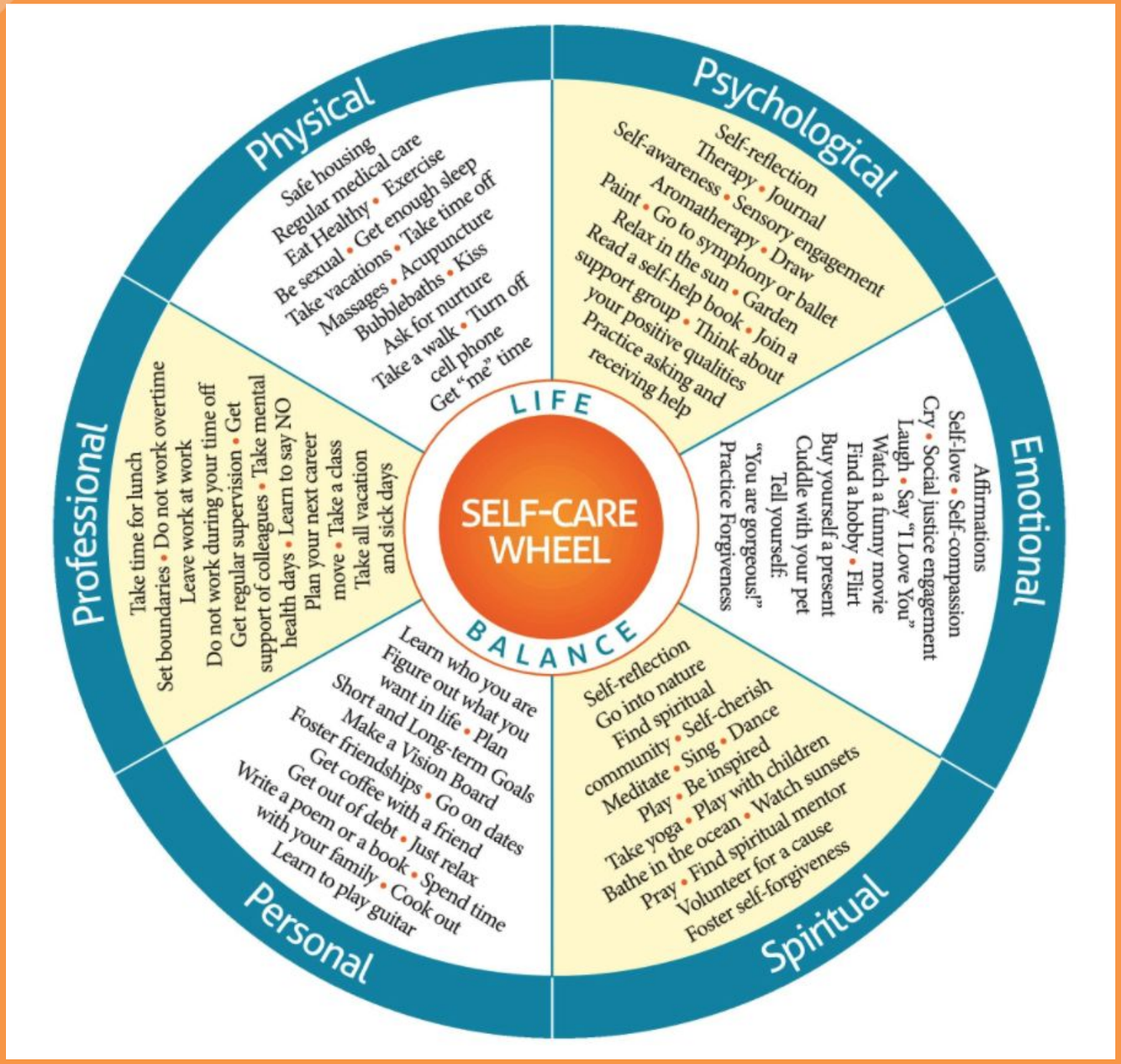

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Kindness

Kindness is the quality of being **friendly**, **generous**, and **considerate**.

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Are you practicing one-way compassion?

“If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion.”

Dalai Lama XIV, *The Heart of Happiness*

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The 3 Components of Self-Compassion

"I am feeling overwhelmed right now and can't do it all, but that's okay. Others feel like that sometimes as well. I just want to cry right now, and I am going to allow myself to do so."

- Mindfulness
- Common Humanity
- Kindness

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Are you practicing one-way compassion?

“If your compassion does not include yourself, it is not complete.”

Jack Kornfield

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As caregivers, it's understandable to feel like you are carrying the weight of the world on your shoulders, but it's okay, healthy, and wise to allow yourself to unload a bit and let others help as they are able and/or available.

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Prioritizing Your Needs As A Caregiver

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Start with the Main Thing …

YOU are #1!!!

What do you need the most right now

… tomorrow

…all the time?

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How to put your M.A.S.K. on first

- Adopt a healthy perspective on self-care (not selfish, but self-preservation)
- Communicate your needs to those who matter.
- Pour into your cup first.
- Include others in your wellness practices (built-in accountability).
- Infuse self-care into your “Everyday Life”.
- Make the most of the good days.

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When you focus on your wellbeing, it becomes easier to trade stress for peace and rest.

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Balance is hard but, things can get better with intentionality & effective support

Remember, life is a balancing act, so start making tradeoffs that lead to wellbeing and not stress.

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M.A.S.K. Up!

- **M**indfulness
- **A**sking for help
- **S**elf-care
- **K**indness

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Free Resources

- Caregiver Stress Assessment
- Self-Care Assessment
- Self-care Plan Worksheet & Tips

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