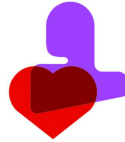




Crisis > Change > Choice: Caring for Caregivers



Strategies for Personal & Group Support

Helping people process what they are going through, especially after a crisis, is extremely important. Here we present several key strategies and techniques focused on supporting those in caregiving roles, including but not limited to, first responders, teachers, therapists, clergy, parents and medical professionals.

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We are all caregivers, maybe not all the time, but certainly in many circumstances.

Helping people process what they are going through, especially after a crisis, is extremely important. Here we present several key strategies and techniques focused on supporting those in caregiving roles, including but not limited to, first responders, teachers, therapists, clergy, parents and medical professionals.

We suggest this as a 2 to 3 hour online workshop. It is a useful followup for people who have completed the Crisis>Change>Choice (8 hour) workshop. This can also be modified for delivery to groups who have not participated in the Crisis>Change>Choice (8 hour) workshop.

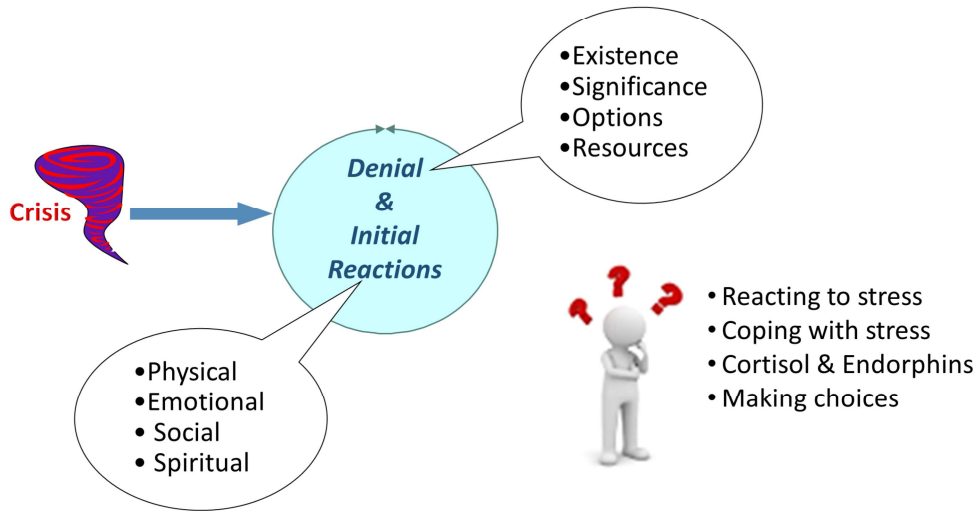
Objectives

2

- Identify types and effects of stress on personal wellbeing
- Choices/consequences of actions/outlook (healthy/ harmful behavior, thinking)
- Recognize particular needs of caregivers
- Learn strategies for self-care

Initial Phases of Crisis > Change > Choice Model

3

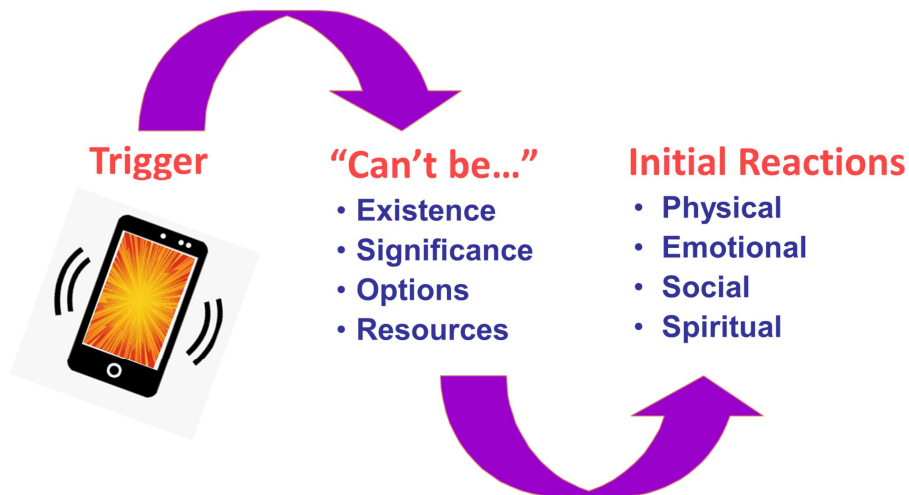


How do we, caregivers, react to crisis and stress?

Recognizing & managing caregivers' challenges is an essential step for caregivers. The initial phases of the CCC model are presented on following pages/slides 4-16.

Reacting to Stress

4



CSSE

4

Ask participants, how does each person usually react to stress?

Facilitator can give or ask for an example of a stressful situation and then the personal reaction to that situation.

Conceptual Support:

Change is **external**, causing **internal adjustments**:

- learning/rediscovering coping skills
- decision-making under stress
- evaluating consequences of decisions

for individuals and for communities and responsible leaders, agencies, etc.

Important to remember that leaders are also people, going through their own process while being responsible for well-being of the community.

Our workshops include techniques to address these issues.

Denial [“Can’t be...”]

5

- the **existence** of a problem
- the **significance** of the problem
- the **options** available to change
- that **resources** or **people** can help



Denial is normal and helps prepare us for facing reality.

Facilitator can give and/or ask for examples.

Reactions to Stress

6

- Physical?
- Emotional?
- Social?
- Spiritual?
- Other?



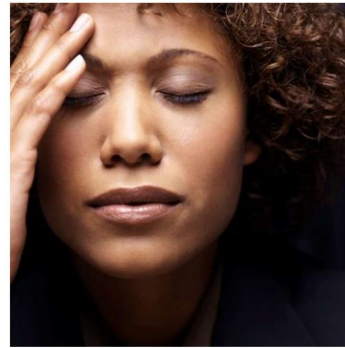
Group conversation (5-10 minutes) to share personal reactions. Pay attention to these 4 areas.

Recognizing personal reactions is important for moving forward particularly in stressful situations. Stressful situations often cause uncomfortable, "negative" reactions.

Physical Reactions

7

- Somatic reactions
 - Aches and pains
 - Shortness of breath
 - Excessive perspiring
 - Heart pounding
- Energy level extremes
 - Fatigue
 - Hyperactivity



- Changes in
 - Sleep patterns
 - Eating habits
 - Appearance

These are several examples of physical reactions. What are some others?

Emotional Reactions

8

Guilt



Sadness



Fear



Anger



All are normal, natural & sometimes necessary



8

Generally, people are uncomfortable with negative emotions that they are feeling personally or observing in others. So it is important to learn how to recognize and accept these emotions, in order to deal with them in a helpful way.

Example: when a child is upset, sad or angry that his toy is broken, a parent or teacher might first say,

- a) "Don't cry. Don't be angry. We can fix it." or
- b) "Oh, how sad that your toy is broken."

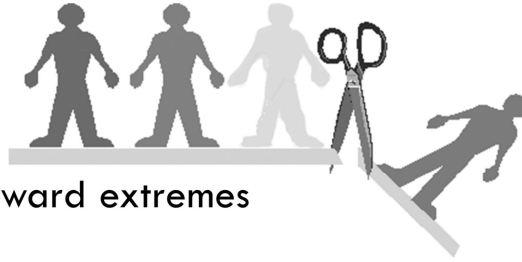
What would you say and why? We want people to feel safe to express their emotions (of all types) and find safe ways to do so.

<p>Sadness:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A deep, recurring sense of loss; may last a long time • Crying <p>Fear:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Of another crisis • Of not being able to survive or cope • Of financial loss • Of the consequences of these on others 	<p>Anger/rage at</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nature • Government • Family & Friends • Volunteers & Aid Workers • Even at God! <p>Guilt or Self Blame for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • something they did • something they failed to do • something they think they did/failed to do • the disaster (natural or otherwise out of their control)re
---	--

Sometimes illogical, all are normal, natural & sometimes necessary!

Social Reactions

9



May tend toward extremes

- Isolation
- Needing to be with others
- Aggressiveness
- Passivity



9

These are a few examples of social reactions.

Sometimes people are not accepting of another person's need to adjust how they interact with others during and after stressful situations.

Isolation or Needing to be with others: Be attentive that someone that these reactions are not necessarily negative as long as they do not persist.

Aggressiveness: In social situations this can be something like dominating the conversation, ignoring the needs of others, insisting on being "right", etc.

Passivity: In social situations, can be something like being there but not participating, letting others make decisions that affect them personally

Occasional or brief episodes of these behaviors are not concerning. It is when these types of behaviors are persistent or continue that they can become problematic.

Spiritual Reactions/Seeking Meaning

10

- Seeking solace in liturgy, ritual
- Increase in magical or mystical thinking
- Fanaticism
- Rejection or distortion of doctrine



NASA, Earthrise, Dec 1968, taken by Apollo 8 crew

These are several examples. What others can you think of?

Coping with Stress

11

Self-care: maintain balance

- Physical
- Emotional
- Social
- Spiritual

Self Care
Isn't Selfish,
it is essential
for well-being!



How are you caring for yourself?



11

Self-care is not selfish, it is essential for personal well-being as well as for helping others.

Examples:

- Seek trusted friend or relative and share your thoughts, feelings, desires
- Reach out to others so that they can share their thoughts, feelings, desires
- Try to reserve a bit of each day for yourself to relax, reflect, rejuvenate

Cortisol & Endorphins

12

Cortisol:

A hormone secreted by the adrenal glands in response to any kind of physical, emotional or psychological stress.



Endorphins:

Hormones that create feelings of well-being and stimulate the immune system.



How we react, how we behave, how we think, all affect and are affected by our hormones. If we can become more aware of the relationship between our bodies and our thoughts and actions, we might be better at making choices that will help us get through our circumstances safely and more effectively.

Choices: Physical Wellbeing

13

Harmful:

- Smoking
- Nutritional imbalance
- Excessive use of alcohol or drugs
- Sedentary lifestyle



↑ Cortisol

Helpful:

- Exercise
- Massage and touch
- Breathe deeply
- Balanced diet
- Get enough sleep



↑ Endorphins

What are you choosing to do?



13

These are a few examples.

Harmful choices generate cortisol.

Helpful choices generate endorphins.

Choices: Emotional Wellbeing

14

Harmful:

- Negative thoughts
- Negative personal messages
- Repressing emotions
- Stubbornness or inflexibility



↑ Cortisol

What messages are you sending to yourself?

Helpful:

- Smile and laugh
- Think positively
- Use creativity
- Be flexible
- Accept yourself
- Recognize & share your emotions



↑ Endorphins

These are a few examples.

Harmful choices generate cortisol.

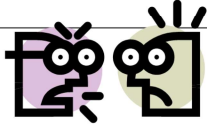
Helpful choices generate endorphins.

Choices: Social Wellbeing

15

Harmful:

- Arguing
- Telling and hearing lies
- "Stuck" relationships
- Negative recognition
- Excessive competition
- Mockery and belittling



↑ Cortisol

How are you interacting?

Helpful:

- Talk/reach out with friends and family
- Give and receive positive "strokes"
- Participate and build consensus
- Take time-out from technology



↑ Endorphins

These are a few examples.

Harmful choices generate cortisol.

Helpful choices generate endorphins.

.

Choices: Spiritual Wellbeing

16

Harmful:

- Dependence
- Escapism
- Excessive proselytizing
- Fanaticism



↑ Cortisol

Helpful:

- Pray and meditate
- Connect with nature
- Sing, dance, paint, create
- Help others
- Define and live your values



↑ Endorphins

*How are you taking care
of your spirit?*

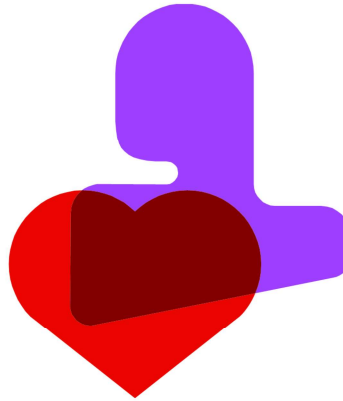
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Harmful choices generate cortisol.

Helpful choices generate endorphins.

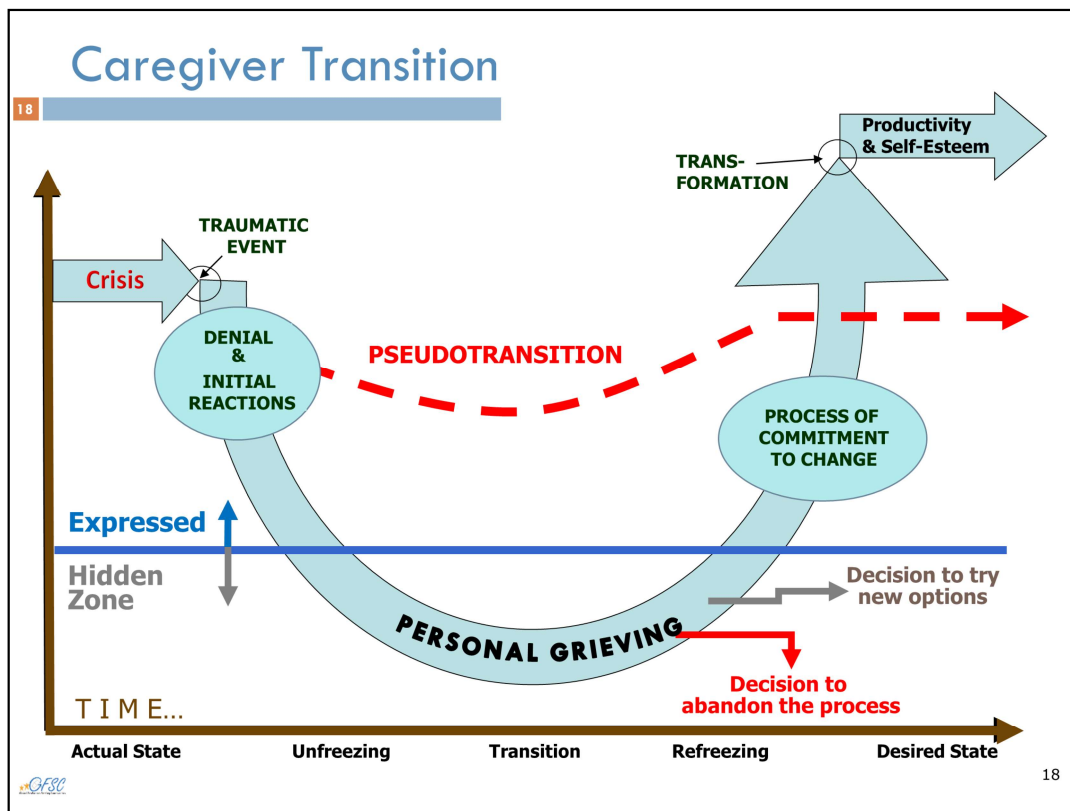
What Do Caregivers Need?

17



What are some of your caregiving challenges?

Recognizing & managing caregivers' challenges. This is an essential step for caregivers.



Often when in caregiver mode, people avoid dealing with their own grief and focus on the people they are helping. See the Pseudotransition line! The main point of this slide: As caregivers, we need to find ways--at appropriate times, in appropriate ways, with people we are able to--to authentically grieve. This means "lowering the blue line" to really expose your personal sense of grief--not merely to do it at a surface level, which leads to a "pseudotransition" through our grief.

Explanation:

Especially for caregivers, when a crisis or traumatic event occurs, there is a tendency to ignore what we are feeling and focus instead on helping others. If caregivers continue to ignore their own grieving process (see the Hidden Zone), it will prolong the grieving and often manifest itself in ineffective or unhealthy ways.

Example of addressing personal crisis in a positive way:

A good friend is dealing with her husband's diagnosis of kidney failure, dementia and related complications. She is his primary caregiver as well as primary financial supporter. She has discovered a wonderful website, Caring Bridge, <https://www.caringbridge.org/>: "From [the beginning] of CaringBridge, we've been working toward a single vision: a world where no one goes through a health journey alone...to turn this vision into reality, we've made it our mission to build bridges of care and communication providing love and support on a health journey." Here someone can write about what they are going through and how they are feeling about it, dealing with it and sharing their journey with friends and family who can read, respond and give their support (many respond with emotional, social, physical and spiritual support). this is an example of how social media and the internet can offer tools to help people take care of themselves while caring for others. It is helpful over time to deal with the personal grieving as well as the practical challenges of continuing daily living through trauma.

Ask (workshop) participants: What other ideas do you have for helping caregivers recognize the importance of going through their personal grieving process? What are the risks of ignoring this process?

Emotions are Contagious

19

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E-vHYv3RBfM>



19

Other videos portraying contagious emotions:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T9Pb0t8D610&t=42s>

Video de Elsa Punset sobre el contagio emocional

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=STGkd9-xyFU> (español)

How Emotions are Contagious

20

- Humans are born with the ability to feel emotion as well as detect, absorb, reflect and imitate the emotions of others
- Emotions can spread quickly and are a foundation of our daily behavior
- We all have an innate tendency to get infected by the emotions of others around us, automatically and sometimes unconsciously
- To survive and feel we are part of a group, we imitate or reflect the emotions others in our group, consciously or unconsciously

It is important to limit the spread of negative emotions and spread positive emotions!



20

- Babies as young as 1 hour old are already able to imitate facial expressions.
- Emotions are human qualities that vary with our circumstances. We can control our emotions to an extent. We can train ourselves to be more aware of our emotions and the affect they are having on us as well as on the people around us.
- At times we all try to conceal our emotions, sometimes with little success!
- Sometimes emotions are difficult to discern as they can flash by in a moment or stay for much longer
- At times we try to conceal our emotions, sometimes with little success!

Vicarious Trauma

21

When we spend a lot of time in an environment of painful and very intense emotions, we can fall into: **VICARIOUS TRAUMA!**

What is **Vicarious Trauma**?

A discomfort that we feel because we have been infected by the stress and negative emotions of the people we are helping.



Source: Dr. Gilbert Brenson-Lazan, 2016



21

One significant impact of emotional contagion is vicarious trauma.

After 1st paragraph, ask, Do you know what is Vicarious Trauma?

One important element that contributes to the spread of vicarious trauma is the world of social media and the widespread sharing of photos, videos and statistics of dramatic situations (natural disasters, mass shootings, terrorist attacks, etc.) contribute to the spread of vicarious trauma throughout the population!

Psychologists recommend reducing the amount of time spent watching and sharing negative news.

Symptoms of Vicarious Trauma in Caregivers

22



The most common symptoms are:

- Frequent outbursts of anger, fear or crying
- Not seeing their own work as important
- Loss of self-confidence
- Inappropriate or radical decision-making
- Crisis in couple and family relationships
- Tendency to overly control others
- Excesses of self-sacrifice or saving mentality
- Psychosomatic illnesses

Source: Dr. Gilbert Brenson-Lazan, 2016



22

Have you felt or experienced any of these?

Facilitator can give an example or ask for an example from participants.

Can you think of any other symptoms?

Vicarious Trauma Propensity

23

Your risk of suffering from Vicarious Trauma is higher if you have a habit of:

- Denying or rationalizing emotions
- Constantly isolating yourself from others or being a "lone wolf"
- Having excessive stress or fatigue
- Neglecting yourself
- Taking excessive or unnecessary risks
- Doubting your proven abilities

Source: Dr. Gilbert Brenson-Lazan, 2016

Do you see yourself anywhere on this list?

Self-Help Strategies for Caregivers

24

With the following “**Self-help**” actions, you can considerably reduce your risk of suffering from vicarious trauma by confronting it in an effective way:

- Remember you have choices in how you can cope with stress
- Reflect on your own reactions and do your own grieving
- Carry out concrete self-care actions
- Recognize and respect your limits
- Recognize and use your personal resources
- Maintain a strong support network

Other suggestions?



24

Another suggestion:

At least once a week, think – and record it in any way – three positive moments, feelings or emotions that you have experienced while caring for others.

What other suggestions do you have?

Personal Reactions & Managing Grief

25

- Are you aware of how you have reacted to the traumatic event?
- Have you given yourself permission to feel/think what you think and feel?
- Have you talked to someone else about it?
- Are you noticing and enjoying ordinary moments or small things you might have taken for granted before? For example: a smile on someone's face, the wind in the trees, a sunset, etc.
- What could you do more often to grow personally?
- How can you take better care of yourself?



25

Our experience has taught us that there are three basic strategies for maintaining physical and mental health while working as a facilitator and while mentoring other facilitators and other caregivers in a disaster situation:

- **KNOW YOUR PERSONAL LIMITS.** Every caregiver should become aware of her or his limits in four dimensions: physical, psychological, social, and spiritual. Most of the “caregiver collapse” syndrome we see is directly related to exceeding known or unknown limits.
- **MONITOR YOUR OWN GRIEF PROCESSES.** We cannot give what we do not have. Caregivers who have experienced the same disaster that their clients are dealing with must be sure to dedicate FIRST the time and energy necessary to deal with their own grief and psychosocial reconstruction processes.
- **MAINTAIN A STRONG SUPPORT NETWORK:** We dedicate considerable time and energy to integration and teambuilding with new caregiver teams. This is not just to increase their productivity or effectiveness, but to give them a strong support network. We generally designate two hours a week for sharing experiences and for personal growth work in caregiver teams during the first few months.

Recognize Your Own Limits

26



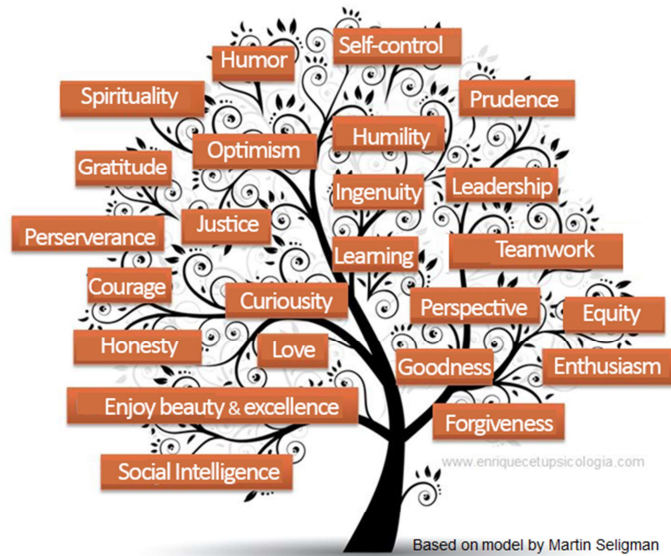
What do you find especially difficult being a caregiver?

*What do you do about it?
What can you do about it?*

Group discussion or break out into smaller groups.

Recognize Your Personal Resources

27



How can you best use these for yourself and others?

27

<https://www.verywellmind.com/what-are-character-strengths-4843090>

Classification of Character Strengths

These character strengths are divided into six classes: wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence. Here are the six (virtues) and the positive character strengths grouped with each of them.

Wisdom: Those who score high in wisdom tend to have cognitive strengths that lead them to acquire knowledge and use it in creative and useful ways. The core wisdom strengths:

- **Creativity:** Thinking of new ways to do things
- **Curiosity:** Taking an interest in a wide variety of topics
- **Open-mindedness:** Examining things from all sides; thinking things through
- **Love of learning:** Mastering new topics, skills, and bodies of research
- **Perspective:** Being able to provide wise counsel to others; looking at the world in a way that makes sense

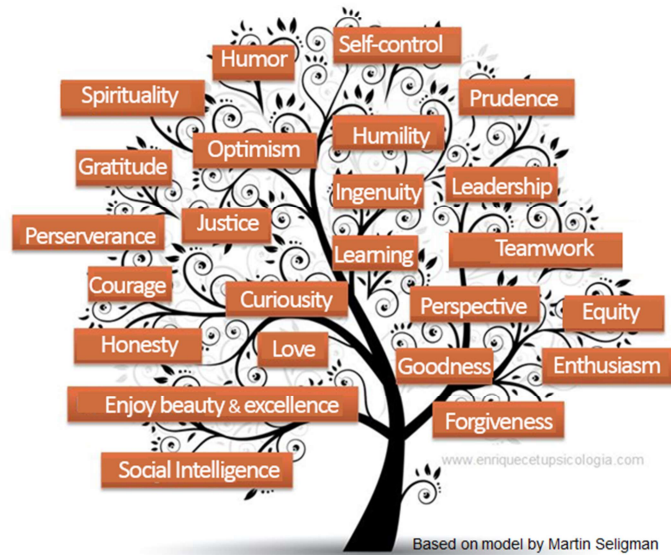
Courage: People who score high in courage have emotional strengths that allow them to accomplish goals despite any opposition they face—whether internal or external. The strengths associated with courage:

- **Honesty:** Speaking the truth; being authentic and genuine
- **Bravery:** Embracing challenges, difficulties, or pain; not shrinking from threat
- **Persistence:** Finishing things once they are started
- **Zest:** Approaching all things in life with energy and excitement

(continued on next page)

Recognize Your Personal Resources

28



How can you best use these for yourself and others?

28

<https://www.verywellmind.com/what-are-character-strengths-4843090>

Classification of Character Strengths, continued

Humanity: Those who score high in humanity have a range of interpersonal strengths that involve caring for and befriending others. These core strengths are:

- **Kindness:** Doing favors and good deeds
- **Love:** Valuing close relations with others
- **Social intelligence:** Being aware of other people's motives and feelings

Justice: People who are strong in justice tend to possess civic strengths that underscore the importance of a healthy community.

- **Fairness:** Treating all people the same
- **Leadership:** Organizing group activities and making sure they happen
- **Teamwork:** Working well with others as a group or a team

Temperance: Those high in temperance characteristics tend to have strengths that protect against the excesses in life.

- **Forgiveness:** Forgiving others who have wronged them
- **Modesty:** Letting one's successes and accomplishments stand on their own
- **Prudence:** Avoiding doing things they might regret; making good choices
- **Self-regulation:** Being disciplined; controlling one's appetites and emotions

Transcendence: People strong in transcendence tend to forge connections with God, the universe, or religions that provide meaning, purpose, and understanding.

- **Appreciation of beauty:** Noticing and appreciating beauty and excellence in everything
- **Gratitude:** Being thankful for the good things; taking time to express thanks
- **Hope:** Expecting the best; working to make it happen; believing good things are possible
- **Humor:** Making other people smile or laugh; enjoying jokes
- **Religiousness:** Having a solid belief about a higher purpose and meaning of life

Maintain a Strong Support Network

29

- Stay connected with family and friends as much as possible.
- Use mutual support between partners.
- Celebrate together the success of each one and the arrival of each team goal.
- Share your experiences and strongest emotions with a trusted person.



We hope this module is helpful for individuals and groups who are in caregiving roles regularly or occasionally. The importance and staying connected with others is a key factor in caring for oneself. Remember what the flight attendants always say when reviewing the emergency procedures in an airplane: ***"Be sure to put your (oxygen) mask on first, before helping others."***

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