
CAREGIVER QUARTERLY

VA PORTLAND HEALTH CARE SYSTEM CAREGIVER SUPPORT PROGRAM December 2015

PTSD Supports & Services (part II)

By Amber Lynch, LCSW

Caregiver Support Social Worker

In Part I of this series, we focused on the definition and symptoms of PTSD and provided web links for tools and treatments for Veterans experiencing PTSD. Parts II and III of this series will focus on how PTSD can affect relationships with family members and tools and supports for family members Caregiving for Veterans experiencing PTSD.

How PTSD Effects Family Members & What To Do About It

(excerpt adapted from: The National Center for PTSD "Effects of PTSD on Family")

Living with PTSD can be difficult for Veterans and families. It is important to recognize the common reactions you may experience as a family member to know you are not alone and that help and support are available.

Common reactions of family members Family members of a person with PTSD may experience the following: **Sympathy:** You may feel sad for your loved one's suffering. This may help your loved one know that you sympathize with him or her. However, be careful that you are not treating him or her like a permanently disabled person. With help, he or she can feel better. **Negative feelings:** PTSD can make someone seem like a different person. If you believe your family member no longer has the traits you loved, it may be hard to feel good about them. The best way to avoid negative feelings is to educate yourself about PTSD. Even if your loved one refuses treatment, you will likely benefit from some support. **Avoidance:** Avoidance is one of the symptoms of PTSD. Those with PTSD avoid situations and reminders of their trauma. As a family member, you may be avoiding the same things as your loved one. Or you may be afraid of his or her reaction to certain cues. One possible solution is to do some social activities, but let your family member stay home if he or she wishes. However, he or she might be so afraid for your safety that you also can't go out. If so, seek professional help to develop strategies to address these issues.

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4th Annual "Unsung Heroes" Family Caregiver Conference Recap!

By Rosalie Broomfield, Social Work Intern

Caregiver Support Program

The Caregiver Support Program (CSP) and VA Portland hosted the 4th Annual Family Caregiver Conference, "Unsung Heroes", on November 9th. Caregivers gathered together to spend the day listening to speakers, sharing and talking with one another, participating in Healing Touch, and reflecting on their goals and values. The CSP team appreciates all the Caregivers who were able to attend the conference and who created an environment of incredible support and compassion for one another. We missed all those Caregivers who were not with us, in person, and we honor each of you and thank you for being a part of the VA Caregiving community.

During this year's Conference, we heard from Chaplain, Janet Hanson about how to cope with changing roles and life transitions. We learned about courage and vulnerability as it relates to Caregiving from Kyong Yi, LCSW and Alison Christ, LCSW. This talk built off of the work of Dr. Brene Brown. Caregivers at the conference received a copy of Dr. Brown's book, "Daring Greatly". We hope to hear thoughts about the book from those who read it! To borrow a copy from the Caregiver Lending Library, please call 503.273.5210.

In the afternoon, four Caregivers graciously volunteered to answer questions and share about their experiences as Caregivers. Panelists discussed challenges associated with their role as Caregivers, resources that are helpful to them, how they find balance and engage in self-care, and how they are able to find "breaks" or respite in their busy lives. It was so meaningful to hear from our panelists and we thank them for being willing to share about their experience. We ended the day hearing from Dr. Jennifer Hightower and reflecting about how values can serve as guiding forces in setting goals for ourselves.

It was a full day and we are so grateful to all those who made it happen! We would like to thank Portland Community College for hosting us at their Rock Creek campus and all of the folks who joined us to share information about their work during the Resource Fair!



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Caregiver Support Program Mission Statement:

To promote the health and well-being of family Caregivers who care for our nation's Veterans, through education, resources, support, and services.

Depression: This is common among family members when the person with PTSD causes feelings of pain or loss. When PTSD lasts for a long time, you may begin to lose hope that your family will ever "get back to normal."

In Part III, we will cover Anger and Guilt, Fear and Worry, and Physical Health Challenges that may occur for a family member of a Veteran experiencing PTSD.

Services and Supports for you! Family members frequently devote themselves totally to those they care for and, in the process, neglect their own needs. It is important for family members to take care of themselves; both for their own good and to help the person dealing with PTSD. Even if your partner, family member, or friend with PTSD is getting treatment and getting better, you may still feel drained, worried, or even frustrated. Social support is extremely important for helping with PTSD. You need support at the same time you are giving support. Your own support network - family, friends, and health providers - is a good place to start, but don't be afraid to reach out beyond that close circle. Nobody expects you to have all the answers.

While it is normal to feel frustrated at times, there are many things you can do: **1.** Take care of the basics of self-care: good rest, good nutrition, moderate exercise, address your healthcare needs. **2.** Learn as much as you can about PTSD. Knowing how PTSD affects people may help you understand what your family member is going through. The more you know, the better you and your family can handle PTSD. **3.** Tell your loved one you want to listen and that you also understand if he or she doesn't feel like talking. **4.** Plan family activities together, like having dinner or going to a movie. **5.** Take a walk, go for a bike ride, or do some other physical activity together. **6.** Encourage contact with family and close friends. A support system will help your family member get through difficult changes and stressful times.

Caregiving Through the Holidays

Excerpt adapted from Veteran's Health: Caregiver Support Program

Providing care during the holidays can be more stressful than usual. Caregivers can feel stress, frustration, loneliness and anger during the year. This has a tendency to impact them strongly during the holidays as the demands increase and time for self-care decreases. Family caregivers may feel resentment towards family and friends for not helping enough with the caregiving responsibilities throughout the year.

During the holidays, it is a great time to ask a family caregiver how to support them. Many times family members come together to celebrate and provide some respite care to family caregivers. Caregivers can benefit from help with home repairs, sitting with the Veteran so they can visit their doctors, to take a vacation or get a spa treatment.

VA supports family caregivers during the holiday season. We offer a series of Self-Care courses to train caregivers on how to care effectively for themselves. We offer training on Managing Stress, Problem Solving and Effective Communication and Taking Care of Yourself. You can go to our website at www.caregiver.va.gov to learn more about these courses.

With VA's Caregiver Support Line, assistance is just a quick phone call away. Whether you're in need of immediate assistance or have questions about what services you may be eligible for, the caring licensed professionals who answer the support line can:

- Tell you about the assistance available from VA.
- Help you access services.
- Connect you with the Caregiver Support Program at a VA Portland Health Care System
- Just listen, if that's what you need right now.

If you're just getting started with VA, calling the Caregiver Support Line is a great first step to take to learn more about the support that's available to you.

If you have questions, please contact VA Portland Health Care System's Caregiver Support Program at 503-273-5210.



UPCOMING EVENTS

Care for the Caregiver

Facilitated by the VA Caregiver Support Line

A telephone education group focused on strategies to enhance resilience and restore balance.

December 8, 16, 23: Finding Comfort in the Healing Gifts of the Season

January 12, 20, 27: Creating a Space for You: Caring for a Loved One at Home

February 9, 17, 24: Leaning into Love: Building Strong Relationship Bonds

Caregiver Support Drop-In Group

VA Portland Health Care System Bldg. 100 5D 122

1st and 3rd Mondays of each month, 1-3pm

Caregiver Wellness Café

VA Portland Health Care System: Salem Clinic

4th Wednesday of each month, 1-2 pm

&

VA Portland Health Care System: Vancouver Clinic

1st Thursday of each month, 10-11 am

Gentle Yoga for Family Caregivers

VA Portland Health Care System Bldg. 100 5D 122

2nd & 4th Mondays of each month, 1:00-2:15

VA Caregiver Support Program Website

Includes Caregiver toolbox, diagnosis care sheets, everyday tips & checklists, Caregiver connections, Caregiver Support Line presentations and more!

www.caregiver.va.gov

Please RSVP to the Caregiver Support Program for all upcoming events by calling (503)273-5210.

Let's Get Cooking!

Easy Holiday Crumb Cake

(an old family recipe that the young ones call "Crumby Cake")

Submitted by Marcia



Blend together:

1 stick (room temp) butter

2C flour

1C sugar

2-1/2 tsp baking powder

pinch salt

1 tsp cinnamon

Set aside 2/3 cup of that mix

To remaining (other than the 2/3 cup) mix, stir in to make batter:

1 beaten egg

1/2 C milk

1 tsp vanilla

Pour the batter mixture into a greased 8x8 baking dish.

Sprinkle the "set aside" mixture over the top of the batter.

Bake at 350° about 25-30 minutes. Bon appetit!

Thank you, Marcia! If you have a recipe you would like share, please send to: Amber.Lynch@va.gov

Caregiver Wellness Café

By Maria Loebach, RN BSN, HTP-A

Caregiver Support Program Home Visit RN

"Sometimes the most important thing in a whole day is the rest we take between two deep breaths." – Etty Hillesum

What: We are excited to announce that the Caregiver Wellness Café is now being offered at the Vancouver Campus! This Wellness Café has been designed to support the health and well-being of Caregivers of all eras. We explore a variety of holistic self-care practices and learn about the physical, mental, and emotional benefits of these practices. This is also a great way to connect with other Caregivers!

When: 1st Thursday of each month; 10:00-11:00 a.m.

Where: **Vancouver Campus** VA Portland Healthcare System 1601 E 4th Plain Blvd. Columbia Room Building 11 Room 305 Vancouver, Washington ****Limited space available, please RSVP by calling Maria Loebach, RN at 503-729-0781 or email maria.loebach@va.gov.**

VA Portland Family Advisory Board

Have you heard about the Veteran and Family Advisory Board?

Caregiver Barbara Besand has been selected for a position on the Veteran and Family Advisory Board at VA Portland Health Care System.

The goal of the board is to include the voices of Veterans and family members in order to promote and support ideas for possible change in the practice and experience of physical and mental health care. The mission of the board is to be a voice for Veterans, Veteran families, and Veteran Caregivers to the health care system.

Please help give Veteran families a voice, by sharing your perspective with Barb.

She can be reached at: 503-805-3251 or by email: mabblb@msn.com.

If you use email, please type "Veteran Family Voice" in the reference line. Your name will be held confidential, unless you would prefer otherwise.

Thank you!

Chair Yoga

Chair Pigeon - Eka Pada Rajakapotasana

<http://yoga.about.com/od/yogasequences/tp/Chair-Yoga-Poses.htm>



To begin, sit upright in chair with legs at a 90 degree angle to the ground.

Bring your right ankle to rest on your left thigh, keeping the knee in line with your ankle as much as possible.
Hold three to five breaths.

You may forward bend to intensify the stretch if you like.
Repeat with the left leg up.

please consult your primary care provider before starting any new exercise practice