

# The Balanced Caregiver

Wednesday, June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2008  
6:30-8:00pm (EST)

A tele-learning session  
in support of MS Caregivers



# Welcome & introductions

Nicole Mellin

National Vice-President, Client Services  
MS Society of Canada

# Special thanks:

 **CARE-RING VOICE NETWORK** *No caregiver left behind.*

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**HOW AN ORDINARY PHONE CAN CREATE EXTRAORDINARY LIVES.**



*Project developed by*

The Caregiver Support Centre of  
Centre de santé et service sociaux  
Cavendish

 Centre affilié universitaire

# Overview of tele-learning session format

# Guest speakers:

- Dr. Jennifer Rodgers, R. Psych.  
University of Alberta Hospital
- Mr. Charlie Broderick,  
MS Caregiver, Riverview, NB

# Question #1:

When does the caring role begin?

# Duijnstee & Boeije (1998)

“Once diagnosed, the care role with all its efforts and adjustments is there. At first view the care role seems a logical part of the partner role. But the two are very different. One chooses the partner role, the care role just happens.”

# Care Partnership

- Exchange of information
- Reassurance
- Reduction in feelings of isolation
- Encouragement of other activities and interests

# Care Partnership - continued

- Help with drug injections
- Support and involvement with health care team

# A healthy relationship involves both partners

- The person with MS may need a great deal of assistance depending on level of disability
- The needs and concerns of the healthy partner must be considered in order to maintain health

# Question #2:

How does one maintain an intimate relationship while providing personal care?

# Guilt-ridden, normal responses: Accept them-Deal with them

- Disinterest
- Fatigue
- Sadness
- Worry

# Ideas that have worked for others:

- If at all possible, and if partner agrees, hire someone to provide personal care
- Communicate to one another the best time for intimacy
- Separate out time for intimacy from personal care duties

- Keep medical equipment to a minimum and in an isolated section of the bedroom
- Revive the romantic “set-up” to the bedroom
- Remember, romance is much more than sex. Keep the romance alive by being affectionate throughout the day.

- Nurture a loving attitude that allows for new definitions of romance and beauty
  - Accept inconveniences and interruptions.
  - If you have children, there were some similar challenges with a baby in the house!

# Question #3:

What are the causes of caregiver burnout and what are the signs?

# Caregiving:

- A delicate balance between providing help, support, safety and...
- Preserving your own health and quality of life to the fullest extent possible

# Symptoms of Burnout

- Negative emotions
- Feelings of hopelessness
- Interpersonal problems
- Health problems
- Substance abuse

# Caregiver issues that begin to emerge

- Lack of recognition and appreciation
- Difference in perception about care
- Chronic sorrow

# Causes of Burnout

- Changing roles
- Unrealistic expectations, goals
- Sense of having no control
- Overload
- Perceived criticism, judgment from others
- Isolation
- Financial demands
- Grief

# Counseling can help

- A safe place to vent unthinkable thoughts and unacceptable feelings
- Validation of a difficult situation
- Help with communication skills
- An understanding of the impact of beliefs on emotion

# Question #4

How can I, as a caregiver, take care of myself?

# Self Care

- Know yourself; take a reality check
- People successfully overcome life difficulties by drawing upon internal qualities that are particularly helpful when dealing with life stressors

# Positive Traits

1. Sociability
2. Self Motivation
3. Perceptiveness
4. Autonomy
5. Flexibility
6. Self-Worth
7. Spirituality
8. Perseverance
9. Creativity
10. Humor
11. Positive view of personal future

# Perhaps the 4 most important lessons

- Learn to be assertive about your needs
- Use available resources
- Attend to your own physical health
- Attend to you own emotional health

# Accept a relationship change: if and when it happens

- From:
- romantic commitment
  - shared raising of children
  - plans for a healthy future

To:

- commitment to marriage vows
- loving, supportive relationship
- management of current situation

All are important to one's quality of life!

# Caregiver Assessment tool on the web:

- Test from Robert Stall's (2002) ,  
**Caregiver's Handbook**, Buffalo,  
New York

Can be accessed on-line: Google  
Family Caregiver Centre, Calgary  
Health Region.

# A caregiver perspective

# Question & Answer Period

# What's next? and other caregiver resources

- ❑ Evaluation to follow from Care-Ring Voice Network to session participants
- ❑ Care-Ring Voice Network initiatives ([www.careringvoice.com](http://www.careringvoice.com))

- ❑ Future MS Society of Canada caregiver tele-learning sessions commencing Fall 2008
- ❑ MS Society of Canada resources available for caregivers: new Caregiver publication; current topical information on caregivers through our Ask the Expert website ([www.msanswers.ca](http://www.msanswers.ca)); caregiver section of the MS Society of Canada website ([www.mssociety.ca](http://www.mssociety.ca))

# Special thanks to:

- session participants
- key note speaker: Dr. Jennifer Rodgers
- MS caregiver: Mr. Charlie Broderick