

## The Case Manager's Corner



### Balancing Work & Eldercare Responsibilities

*“Juggling Too Many Hats Can Take Its Toll”*

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Every day, The Caregiver Resource Center receives calls from individuals who feel overwhelmed by the challenges of life; whether it's dealing with parenting, a healthcare issue, an aging parent, or the struggles of living with a disability. Often times these individuals aren't sure what questions to ask, what rights they have, or where to turn for help.

The goal of The Case Manager's Corner is to provide a venue where Linda Ziac can share tips and skills that Linda has acquired over more than 40 years as a licensed psychotherapist, board certified case manager and board certified dementia practitioner; while helping readers become better educated consumers for themselves and their families.

Each month Linda will present a case that she's worked on and the steps she's taken with clients and their families, to positively impact their lives and overcome challenges. Please note that this information is provided in a way that helps protect the client's privacy and confidentiality.

### ARE YOU FEELING OVERWHELMED AND LOOKING FOR SOLUTIONS?

Helping to take care of a loved one can be rewarding; while at the same time challenging, demanding and stressful.

It's no wonder that when people try to juggle too many hats, they are at risk of burnout.

According to WebMD, “Burnout is a state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion that may be accompanied by a change in attitude -- from positive and caring to negative and unconcerned.”

### TODAY'S CASE PRESENTATION – TOM

#### THE SITUATION

Tom is a 35 year old licensed professional psychotherapist. He has 7 years of experience working in a mental health agency providing one of one counseling services. A year ago, Tom left the agency, to start his own company.

Tom and his wife Mary live in New Canaan, Mary is an attorney in NY City striving to become partner in her law firm, and they have three children ages 5, 9, and 13.

Due to the many hats Tom wears as a psychotherapist, husband, son, and an adult child caring for his aging mother; Tom decided to start his own business a year ago, so that he would have more time and flexibility in his schedule.

While working on a business plan, Tom decided that since he had spent the last five years coordinating his mother's care with doctors, home care agencies, caregivers and hospitals; it would make sense for Tom to offer counseling and case management services for seniors..

## **A SUMMARY OF LINDA'S ASSESSMENT AND WORK WITH TOM**

Tom's time became even more stretched 6 months ago, when as an only child, Tom's mother had a stroke, requiring more time and coordination on Tom's part.

Tom dreads when the telephone rings now, for fear it's a call from a needy client, client family, his mother, or his mother's caregiver to report yet another problem.

Home life isn't any more relaxing as Tom tries to balance time with the children (e.g. mealtime, homework, school activities), and participation in his wife's many law firm required social functions.

Over the few past months, Tom has been experiencing increasing headaches and stomach problems, while having trouble falling asleep and staying asleep. In addition, Tom is more irritable, short tempered, and forgetful.

Tom sees his wife as being successful, while Tom is seconding guessing himself, feeling like a failure and wondering whether or not he has what it takes to run a business.

## **OUR PLAN**

Together Tom and Linda focused on:

1. Tracking Projects while Incorporating Time Management Techniques
2. Identified Work and Personal Priorities
3. Set Specific Goals and Objectives along with a Time Line
4. Created a Realistic Work Schedule
5. Worked on Establishing Work and Personal Boundaries
6. Identified Life Stressors and Healthy Coping Techniques
7. Scheduled Personal Time as well as Family Time
8. Explored Exercise Options
9. Identified Available Resources to Assist with Personal Caregiving Responsibilities
10. Located a Personal Support Group

## **HOW TO RECOGNIZE BURNOUT IN YOURSELF**

Experts have determined that there are 7 signs of burnout.

If you are experiencing one or more of these, you may be at risk for burnout.

### **STAGE 1 - Loss of Appetite or Other Changes in Your Eating Habits**

- Are you eating less?
- Eating more?
- Losing or gaining weight?
- Eating junk foods?
- Skipping meals?

### **STAGE 2 - Overly Emotional**

- Do you begin to cry unexpectedly or at inopportune times?
- Do you laugh at things that aren't funny?
- Are you overly sensitive to the comments of others?

### **STAGE 3 - Feeling Overwhelmed**

- Do you wake up in the morning wondering how you are going to get through the day?
- Do you feel like tasks are accumulating, and you will never be able to catch up?

### **STAGE 4 - Withdrawn**

- Are you beginning to withdraw into yourself, and away from the world?
- Are you tending to bottle emotions up inside of yourself?
- Are you avoiding confronting people - either your care recipient or others?

### **STAGE 5 - Isolation from Peers**

- Have you stopped participating in activities that you once enjoyed?
- Are you avoiding the phone calls or other friendly social advances of others?
- Are you making excuses for not seeing people?

### **STAGE 6 - Losing Focus at Work**

- Are you unable to concentrate on your job?
- Do you find yourself taking excessive time worrying about non- job-related things?
- Do you take excessive time off from work to attend to the needs of your care recipient?
- Has your boss mentioned that you don't seem as focused as you once did?

## **STAGE 7 - Lack of Interest in Appearance**

- Have you stopped buying clothes for yourself?
- Stopped getting regular haircuts?
- Lost interest in looking your best?

Anyone in a caregiving role is likely to experience some of these symptoms at one time or another.

Ask yourself if the warning signs are debilitating, making your life seem impossible. If so, you may very well be experiencing caregiver burnout, and you may want to seek professional help.

A doctor, therapist or case manager can help you recognize what you can do to make yourself feel better, to take better care of yourself, and to meet the challenges of caregiving once again with an open heart and mind.

## **THE VALUE OF CASE MANAGEMENT**

Care for seniors and people with special needs often requires a multi-disciplinary team approach that encompasses many aspects of life such as:

- Health and Mental Health
- Activities of Daily Living (ADLs)
- Transportation
- Finances
- Social Opportunities
- Emotional Well Being

***This process needs to focus on the person's:***

- Hopes and Desires
- Short and Long Term Goals
- Abilities and Needs
- Spectrum of Resources to address current and evolving needs

***Case Management is a collaborative process that consists of four steps:***

1. Needs Assessments
2. Development of a customized Care Plan (road map)
3. Implementation & Monitoring of the Plan
4. Ongoing Review and Modification of Care Plans as client needs change

Certified Case Managers (CCM) are specialists who assist seniors, people with special needs and their families; in planning for and implementing ways to allow for the greatest degree of health, independence, safety and quality of life.

CCMs meet with the client and /or family members to assess their needs, develop a Care Team, and work with members of the Team to formulate a comprehensive Care Plan (a road map).

Once a plan is in place, CCMs are available to serve as the point person to monitor and coordinate services, and revise the plan as needed. The CCMs' role is similar to the conductor of an orchestra; ensuring that there is good communication, teamwork, and that everyone remains focused on the desired goals.

## **IS A SUPPORT GROUP RIGHT FOR YOU?**

As a caregiver, you may be feeling alone. You don't have as much time to socialize now that you have to care for a senior or person with special needs. Often times your own family may not understand what you are going through.

If this sounds like you, you might want to try to find a support group.

## **WHY A SUPPORT GROUP?**

Support groups are one of the best places for caregivers to find others who are experiencing similar situations. They can help caregivers bond with each other, socialize and build a network of caring, supportive people. Support groups are important because caregivers can express their emotions in a safe place, and can hear from others who have gone or are going through some of the same emotions.

These groups are **not** meant to be group therapy, but they do allow people to understand that they are not alone, and to learn how others have handled similar emotions, crises and problems. Support groups can also allow people to share valuable information and insights into the dynamics of caregiving and specific illnesses or medical conditions.

## **TYPES OF SUPPORT GROUPS**

A wide variety of support groups are available for caregivers, although these groups are often difficult to sustain. Some groups are designed for people caring for seniors with specific medical, psychological or physical conditions - such as Alzheimer's disease, dementia, diabetes or other illnesses. Others have a more general focus, designed for caregivers of all ages and in all situations.

Think about what kind of support you need, and then start looking for a group that can help with that kind of support. Depending on your interests and time, an Internet support group may be an ideal option so you can share feelings and experiences with others while not taking up too much of your time.

## **WHERE TO FIND A SUPPORT GROUP**

Support groups are formed in many different locations, and you can look around for the one that best suits your needs.

***Here are some of the places that you might look for a support group:***

- **HOSPITAL:** Hospitals often host a variety of support groups, particularly those that focus on a particular medical condition. Check the bulletin boards at your hospital.

- **DOCTOR'S OFFICE:** Ask your doctor if he or she knows of any caregiver support groups in your area.
- **SENIOR CENTER:** Senior centers are a great place to find support groups for caregivers, particularly those focusing on caring for a spouse. Call your local senior center to see what is available.
- **LIBRARY:** Check the local library's newsletter and bulletin boards to see if there are notices of support groups that meet there.
- **NEWSPAPER:** Look under the community section of your local newspaper for information about local support groups, including times, dates and meeting places.
- **CHURCH/SYNAGOGUE:** Churches and synagogues often sponsor or host support groups. Check with your minister, priest or rabbi about these.
- **INTERNET:** Increasingly, the Internet offers a way for caregivers to network with each other -locally, nationally and internationally. Look at reputable websites, like AARP, to find information about support groups that meet in real life and in the virtual world.
- **ASSOCIATIONS:** Organizations like the Alzheimer's Association often sponsor support groups; call the local or national number for the organization that interests you to see if there is information about any local support groups.

Source of this section: Parlay International

## INFO-LINE 211

### *Remember that help is just a phone call away!*

As Linda shared in a previous blog article on Info-line, the 211 data base resource number is nationwide, and is operated by a private non-profit community service organization, local government, or local affiliates of the United Way of America.

The amazing thing about dialing 211 is that no matter where you live in the U.S. or Puerto Rico, you will receive access to information and referrals regarding local and national assistance,

## WAYS TO ACCESS 211

1. You can pick up the phone and dial 211

You will reach a 211 operator who can assist you finding the information you are seeking.

2. You can visit - <https://www.211.org/about-us/your-local-211>

You will be taken to a website where you can search for by zip code, city, or state

This can be especially helpful if you are searching for resources for a friend or family member who lives in another city or state..

## THE CAREGIVER RESOURCE CENTER

Each person is unique, and as a result, each person has specific needs. Some people may experience mental and physical limitations that limit their level of functioning, while others will remain relatively high functioning.

The Caregiver Resource Center's role is to work with the client, their family and healthcare professionals to help assess, plan for and implement ways to allow for their greatest degree of health, safety, independence, and quality of life.

### **Some Benefits of Our Services**

- Well respected company serving the community since 1990
- All services are individually designed to meet the unique needs of the client
- We are available 7 days a week by appointment, and 24/7 for client emergencies
- Professional support & guidance
- Our services may be provided on-site in the home, doctor's office, ER, hospital, assisted living facility, hospice, or long term care facility

Photo from Microsoft

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*Please consult your health care provider for an appointment, before making any healthcare decisions or for guidance about a specific medical condition.*

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*Linda Ziac is the owner and founder of The Caregiver Resource Center. The Caregiver Resource Center is a division of Employee Assistance Professionals, Inc. which Linda founded in October 1990. The Caregiver Resource Center provides a spectrum of concierge case management and advocacy services for seniors, people with special needs and families.*

*Linda's professional career spans more than 48 years in the health and mental health field as a CT Licensed Professional Counselor, CT Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselor, Board Certified Employee Assistance Professional, Board Certified Case Manager, and Board Certified Dementia Practitioner. In addition, Ms. Ziac has 15 years of experience coordinating care for her own parents.*

*Linda assists seniors, people with special needs and their families; in planning for and implementing ways to allow for the greatest degree of health, safety, independence, and quality of life. Linda meets with individuals and family members to assess their needs, and develop a Care Team, while working with members of the Team to formulate a comprehensive Care Plan (a road map). Once a plan is in place, Linda is available to serve as the point person to monitor and coordinate services, and revise the plan as needed. This role is similar to the conductor of an orchestra; ensuring that there is good communication, teamwork, and that everyone remains focused on the desired goal.*

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