

Powerful Tools for Caregivers of Children with Special Needs

Powerful Tools for Caregivers an evidence based six-week curriculum to help caregivers take care of themselves while caring for child/children with special needs.

We will be discussing how to take care of you as a parent/caregiver, reduce personal stress, how to communicate feelings and concerns, and how to learn from our emotions.

Please see reverse side for class outline.



*Are you feeling stressed out?
You are not alone*

Date: Thursdays, January 25th – March 1st

Time: 6:00pm to 7:30pm

Location: FamilyMeans
1875 Northwestern Avenue S
Stillwater, MN 55082

Cost: \$40.00 for entire series. Scholarships are available.

Register: Call FamilyMeans at 651.789.4039 or email: jsorensen@familymeans.org

Quiet activities will be provided for children by Valley Friendship Club at FamilyMeans. Donations are appreciated to support this respite care.



Caregivers of Children with Special Needs

Class #1: Taking Care of You

This class sets the stage for the entire course. It emphasizes that the focus is on “YOU, the caregiver, not on the family member receiving care,” and that caregivers will develop a “box of self-care tools.” The challenges of caregiving and significance of caregiver self-care are dramatized through a video. Beginning in this class, caregivers make a weekly action plan for self-care.

Class #2: Identifying and Reducing Personal Stress

Four steps are presented for effective stress management: (1) Identifying early warning signs, (2) Identifying personal sources of stress, (3) Changing what you can change and accepting what you cannot change, and (4) Taking action. Tools to reduce stress are discussed. Participants learn how to change negative self-talk – which increases stress and erodes confidence – to positive self-talk. Caregivers learn five relaxation activities that are easy to incorporate into their daily lives.

Class #3: Communicating Feelings, Needs, and Concerns

Participants learn how to communicate their feelings, needs and concerns more effectively by using “I” messages. Through brief dramatizations, participants experience the impact of both “I” messages and “You” messages (which tend to sound blaming and put people on the defensive). They practice changing “You” messages to “I” messages, and identifying when statements beginning with the word “I” are actually “Hidden You” messages.

Class #4: Communicating in Challenging Situations

Participants practice two communication tools – assertiveness and Aikido – which are helpful in difficult situations. They learn a four-step process, called DESC (**D**escribe, **E**xpress, **S**pecify, and **C**onsequence) for using the assertive style of communication. With Aikido, participants learn how to align and find “common ground” with a person who is distressed. A segment highlights guidelines for communicating with a person who is memory impaired.

Class #5: Learning From Our Emotions

The overriding theme of this class is “our emotions are messages we need to listen to.” It emphasizes that feelings occur for a reason and that feelings are neither good nor bad. Focus is on identifying constructive ways for dealing with difficult feelings – especially anger, guilt, and depression – and resources for professional help.

Class #6: Mastering Caregiving Decisions

Focus is on the internal emotional process caregivers go through when they experience a life change. Tools for dealing with changes and for making tough decisions – including a seven-step decision-making model and the family meeting – are discussed.