BREAK
4 YOU
Self-care concept for family caregivers
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1. Importance of self-care for family caregivers

Being a family caregiver is an emotionally stressful job combined with difficult life circumstances. The attentiveness will inevitably be directed to the environment: the care and well-being of the pancreatic cancer patient who often is in palliative treatment.

The feeling for the own welfare and the perception of body and soul are pushed to the edge. But exactly at that time, in this difficult life circumstances, its so important to take care of yourself and not to disregard your own needs. So you can develop attentiveness for yourself ¹)

Only when you care for yourself, you are able to care for someone else.

2. Aims

- **Improve** quality of life of family caregivers
- **Develop** self-awareness and **listen** to your own needs
- **Strengthen** self-confidence of caregivers
- **Implement** an easy and diverting training in daily routine
3. Meaning of relaxation

Relaxation is a condition of physical and mental ease that express as a physical sensation of warmth, gravity and mental state of contentment and well-being.

One distinguishes between a subjective and an objective component of relaxation. That means it creates a feeling of soulful well-being and a positive change on physical level.

Relaxation has a significant influence on the physical, the affect-emotionally level (strengthening and recovering of self-confidence) and the cognitive level (recognizing the difference between tension and relaxation). It also stimulates the interaction of body and soul.
3.1. Mindfulness-training

Self-perception is the first step of relating sensitively with yourself.
Effect of Mindfulness-training

• Better **awareness, interpretation** and **regulation** of emotions
• **Relating sensitively** with yourself
• **Increased perception** of own needs
• **Better concentration** and **focus** on yourself
• **Higher stress-resistance** und **faster recovery**
• **Focus** on the **here and now**

By being conscious it is possible to set limits between the surroundings and being yourself. **You will earlier perceive excessive demands and you will be able to avoid it.**

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2) Ludwig-Maximilian University, Hospital for palliative medicine: “Mindfulness as an effective factor in the evaluation of an intervention group for relatives of palliative care patients” (German): https://edoc.ub.uni-muenchen.de/15869/1/Koegler_Monika.pdf
Examples of exercises
(guided audio files, guide with instructions and explanations)

• **Walk** consciously **bare-foot** (—> grounding, focus on here and now)

• **Pay attention to your breath** (—> get in touch with your body, „turn off“ external stimuli)

• **Do things mindfully** - eating, cooking, taking a shower, etc. (—> focus on the moment)

• **Consciously perceive sensations** in nature (allows focus on visual, taktile, aural und olfactory perception)
3.2. Guided Meditation

Guided meditation gives you the chance to **dedicate time to yourself** and to emerge from it **a little bit stronger**.
Effect of guided meditation

- Reduction of stress responses
- Increased regulation of emotions
- Visualization and affirmation being executed during meditation, positively influence body functions
- Focusing on guided exercises increases concentration and attentiveness

During the stressful day it is possible to allow yourself a short holiday. You can reach new energy and stability by powerful meditation.
Examples of exercises
(guided audio files, guide with instructions and explanations)

- **Mountain-meditation** (→ grounding, stability, inner peace and relaxation)
- **Breathing-mediation** (→ focus on breathing and the middle of body)
- **Self-love-meditation** (→ esteem of your own performance, self-love und self-acceptance)
- **Power-spot-meditation** (→ creating a mentally powerful place)
3.3. Individual exercise series

Entertaining exercises enable an integration of relaxation methods suitable for everyday use. These lead to an increase of personal well-being.

Elements of Progressive Muscle Relaxation, Kinesiology Brain Gym und Qi Gong
• BRAIN GYM

Is a form of kinesiological exercises that promote the interconnectedness of the two brain-halves, the flow of meridians and concentration. Centerline movements, longitudinal movements, energy exercises, etc. allow a balance of body and mind.

• JACOBSEN TRAINING (Progressive Muscelrelaxation)

This kind of relaxation method is based on the principle of both tensing and relaxing individual muscle parts. When time goes by patients get a sensation for their body tension and relaxation. We use easy exercises that even children are capable to use them. Patients will definitely be sensitized to their muscle tones.

• QI GONG

The heart of this relaxations technique is body awareness and coordination. That means, it is an interplay between body, mind and soul. The focus is on the slow execution of exercises and conscious body awareness. Easy Qi Gong exercises can be performed by everyone to pair relaxation with movement.
4. Implementation

• **Kick-off Event** (face to face) with a roadshow:
  - Presentation of selected online-tools
  - Explanation and exercise of relaxation techniques
  - Completion of a self-assessment of current stress-level

• **Initial phase:**
  - Start the 8-weeks-program with registration of participant at the online-tool with guided audio files, guide with instructions and explanations
  - Support of an qualified relaxation-trainer and a psychologist through “expert-support-line” one time a week and individual coaching calls two weeks after registration

• **Follow up:**
  - Self-guided continuation of the training by using the “expert-support-line” on demand.
5. Quantitative and qualitative metrics of success

- Completion of a self-assessment of current stress-level and health
  - As part of the kick-off
  - At the start of the online tool
  - After initial phase
- Number of calls at the “expert support line”
- Personal feedback from participants during individual coaching calls as well as during support calls
6. Timeline

- **Jan. - March 2019** Kick-off meetings in Vienna, Linz and Innsbruck

- **Jan. - Dez. 2019**
  - Individual online registration of participant and start of the 8-weeks-program
  - “Expert support line”
  - Individual coaching calls
  - Self-guided continuation of the training

- **Jan. 2020** Evaluation of feedback questionnaires

- **Feb. 2020** Follow up with adapted online-tool
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