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Hearts/Mended Little Hearts Caregiver
Committee*



The Mended Hearts, Inc.



Mended
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Hearts

A program of The Mended Hearts, Inc.

Time for Caring - Caregiver Connections

**To: Members, Mended Hearts and Mended *Little*
Hearts**

After a cardiac event, both the caregiver and the heart patient may experience complex and often painful emotions. Each seeks the strength to survive and rebuild their life. While the heart patient is adjusting to the reality of living with heart conditions and congenital heart disease, the caregiver is managing the recovery process, including meeting the emotional needs of the patient and themselves. It is much easier to perform care giving tasks, such as giving medicine on time than to manage one's feelings. If caregivers keep themselves healthy, they will have more energy to maintain a positive attitude and be open to change. Here are some constructive ways to help both you in your caregiving role as parent, spouse, relative, and or friend, and your heart patient manage emotions to feel valued and loved.



Preserve Personal Relationships

Avoiding family and friends will only increase feelings of abandonment. Take the time to explain limitations of your heart patient so they do not judge they are not interested or less caring. For example, share with family and friends if the heart patient needs more rest, and ask them to keep their visits short. Assure family members that it is okay to give hugs and kisses. Have a discussion on how maintaining these relationships are important for the heart patient, the family, and the caregivers.

Embrace Creative Lifestyle Changes

It is sometimes easier to get into a routine which becomes dull and boring; however this may make the heart patient, and caregivers, feel lonely and isolated. Look for ways to stay connected with the outside world. Take an interest in what is going on around you and be a part of it. Go out once a week to somewhere you all enjoy. Visit the local coffee shop, attend church or community events, take a class, go to a sporting event, visit a friend or wander down a path in the park or walk the mall. Go out of town and visit family and friends. Learn to do something different like journaling your feelings, meditating, or yoga!

Provide Emotional Support

The heart patient and caregivers may need help in coping with life experiences; laughter is good medicine. Whenever possible, add humor to your situation and surround yourself with people who know how to do this. Watch inspirational movies that show courage in adversity. Subscribe to a magazine that shares inspirational stories or has daily devotions. Read the testimonies in the *Heartbeat* magazine and share your feelings with each other.

Express Love

The Caregiver is a very important person. Our emotions (feelings) are definitely a part of care giving. Love feels good and is a positive feeling. Compassion, caring, and commitment are expressed by many caregivers, but the most important caregiver ingredient is love. Share your thoughts with each other as a way to better understand each other's feelings. Be gentle and loving with each other. Remembering the adage, "I choose love," will help to have a sense of control of your thoughts. Remember to add loving actions when communicating with each other. Sometimes remembering to simply say "I love you" can be healing and encouraging.



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