Transformative Learning Caregiver Support Groups

Caregiving Kinetics
BY DR. AARON BLIGHT

Transformative Learning Caregiver Support Groups are designed to prompt deep learning among participants over 10 weekly live sessions. Each session aims to be approximately 60 minutes long and should be led by a skilled facilitator.

Rather than mandating a prescriptive approach, the outline below permits the skilled facilitator to incorporate Dr. Blight's caregiving models and other resources into scaffolded learning structures. Deep learning can be prompted by using these resources in connection with thoughtful questions to spur dialogue and generate insights among caregivers in the support group.

Preparation of Facilitator

Before starting, the facilitator may wish to read the following blog posts from Dr. Blight:

- "How Caregiver Support Group Facilitators Can Use Caregiving Models for Discussion and Growth"

- "Why Add 'Questions for Reflection' in a Book about Caregiving?"

These articles provide a good introduction to the underlying approach that is suggested for facilitating Transformative Learning Caregiver Support Groups.

It is recommended that the facilitator spend a few minutes during Session #1 establishing "Ground Rules for Safe Space" with input and buy-in from the group. The purpose of the ground rules is to foster an environment conducive to sharing and learning—one that is imbued with principles of respect, non-judgment, and compassion.

Planning specific questions to be raised for discussion during each session will enhance results. To help caregivers engage in reflective dialogue, the facilitator may draw from:

a)   questions in each corresponding chapter of *When Caregiving Calls*,

b)   questions listed on model worksheets, and/or

c)   other questions prepared by the facilitator in advance.

While facilitating live sessions, a determination to allow the discussion to "go where it needs to go," without reckless derailment, will also help caregivers have a more meaningful learning experience.

Please note that there are two sessions allotted for discussion of "Caregiving Realities" (Sessions #4 and #5). The facilitator may use discretion in dividing, ordering, or combining the content of these sessions, based upon the needs and circumstances of group participants.

Order of Sessions

The recommended order of sessions is found below. The facilitator should invite participants to review select resources prior to each live session, as this will allow more time for group sharing and reflective dialogue during the 60-minute session.

SESSION #1
Welcome & Introductions

- Administer pre-program survey
- Introductions
- Establish "Ground Rules for Safe Space"
- Review schedule and upcoming sessions
- Blog "Why I've Created Models for Family Caregivers and the Professionals Who Work with Them"

SESSION #2
Caregiving Roles

- Review "Ground Rules for Safe Space" established at Session #1
- The roles of caregiver and care receiver
  - Chapter 2 of When Caregiving Calls
  - "Roles" part of Worksheet for the Caregiver Resilience Model
- "The Caregiver," a Downloadable Poem

SESSION #3
Caregiving Relationships

- How caregiving changes your relationship with your loved one(s)
  - Montgomery, R. J. V., & Kosloski, K. (2009). Caregiving as a process of changing identity: Implications for caregiver support. *Generations-Journal of the American Society on Aging*, 33(1), 47-52.
- Chapters 3 & 4 of *When Caregiving Calls*
- "Relationships" part of Worksheet for the Caregiver Resilience Model

SESSION #4
Caregiving Realities
(PART ONE)

- The difficult realities of caregiving
  - "Realities" part of Worksheet for the Caregiver Resilience Model
- The stress of caregiving video on caregiving.com
  - Chapter 6 of *When Caregiving Calls*
- The physical and mental health implications of caregiving video on caregiving.com
  - Caregiver Burden Self-Assessment

SESSION #5
Caregiving Realities
(PART TWO)

- The emotions of caregiving
  - Emotions Worksheet
  - Chapter 13 of *When Caregiving Calls*
  - Blog "How Do You Feel about Caregiving?"
  - Blog "What Self Care Is Not (and What It Is)"
- Care receiver realities
  - Chapters 8, 9, 10, 11, & 12 of *When Caregiving Calls*
  - What is "Aging in Place" and why does that matter? Video on caregiving.com.

SESSION #6
Caregiving Rewards

- The intrinsic rewards of caregiving
  - Chapter 16 of *When Caregiving Calls*
  - "Rewards" part of Worksheet for the Caregiver Resilience Model
- The upsides of caregiving video on caregiving.com

SESSION #7
Caregiver Growth

- Becoming a better caregiver — learning to fill the emerging role
  - Blog "The Pattern of Caregiver Development"
  - Worksheet on The Pattern of Caregiver Development
  - "Readiness" part of Worksheet for the Caregiver Resilience Model
  - Chapters 15 & 17 of *When Caregiving Calls*

SESSION #8
Caregiving Dynamics

- The dynamic caregiving experience
  - Blog "How to Chart Your Caregiving Experience"
  - Blog "How to Know When Caregiving Requires a Change in Your Thinking"
  - Worksheet on Charting Your Caregiving Experience

SESSION #9
Caregiving Mindset

- Caregiver mindset adjustments
  - Blog "Why Your Mindset Matters as a Caregiver"
  - Blog "How Your Thinking Evolves with Caregiving Experience"
  - Worksheet on The Caregiver Mindshift Model

SESSION #10
Wrap Up & Close

- Requesting and receiving help
  - Blog "5 Ways You Can Support a Family Caregiver"
  - Worksheet on How You Can Support a Family Caregiver
- Discuss lessons learned & key takeaways
- Make resolutions for further action and growth
- Administer post-program survey

FOLLOW-UP
Feedback & Questions

Dr. Aaron Blight welcomes all feedback from facilitators of Transformative Learning Caregiver Support Groups.

Please do not hesitate to contact him with questions or comments at **ablight@su.edu** or **aaron@caregivingkinetics.com**.