

Taking care of the carer:

A practical approach to caring for the patient as well as for ourselves

Nic Marcon



What we will cover

- Why is helping so challenging?
 - Why do we care for others?
 - The effects of caring for others
 - Vicarious Trauma
- Coping Mechanisms
 - Positive and negative
- 7 steps to emotional & physical wellbeing
- How we can assist patients



- I have always been better at caring for others than I have been at caring for myself. But in these later years, I have made progress



- Carl Rogers at age 75

Why do we care for others?

- Why did you chose to care for others?
- Core Beliefs
 - From Birth
 - Previous Personal Experience
 - Positive and Negative
 - Self-sacrificer
 - Subjugators
 - Perfectionists

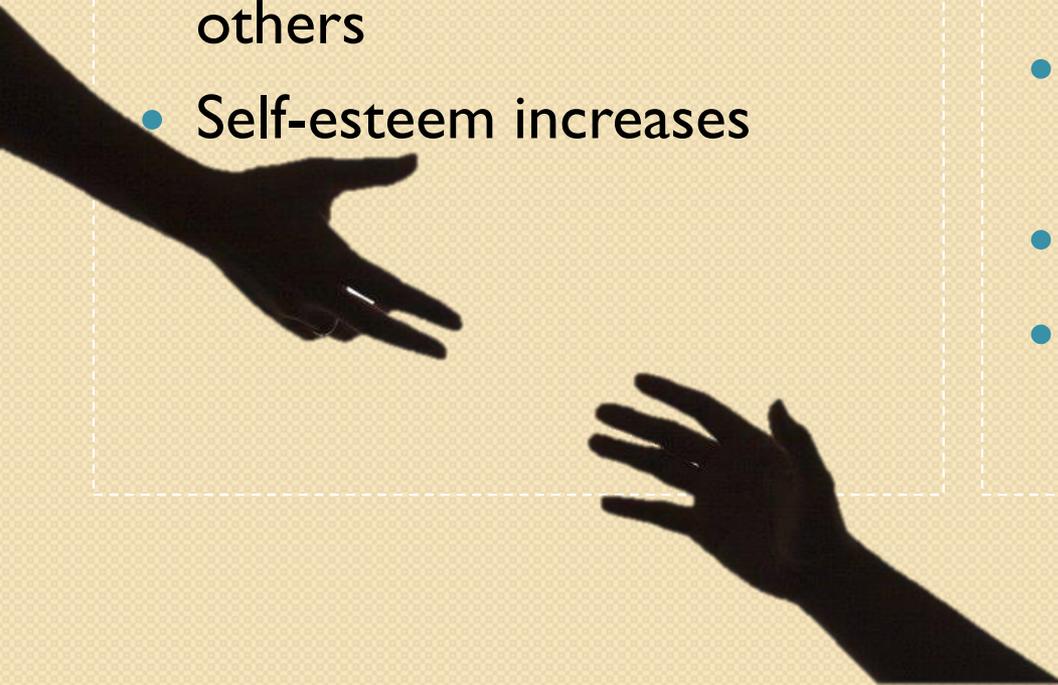
The effects of helping others

Positive

- Personal Growth
 - Achieving goals
 - Meeting personal challenges
- Satisfaction in helping others
- Self-esteem increases

Negative

- Exchange of energy
- Surrounded by negativity
- Emotionally draining
- Physically draining
- Difficult clients are challenging
- Effects empathy
- Can be emotional isolating





Vicarious Trauma (VT)



- Definition
 - Also known as Burn-Out
 - Emotional and cognitive effects on the helper due to working with people who have experienced traumatic life events
 - Up to 67% have experienced VT
- Some don't even know it
- Can turn into PTSD
 - repeated or extreme exposure to aversive details of the traumatic event(s)" as a potential trigger that can produce persistent intrusive symptoms, avoidance of stimuli, alterations in cognitions and marked alteration in arousal and reactivity



The effects of vicarious trauma

- Low motivation
- Low libido
- Poor sleep
- Appetite
- Increased irritability
- Increased addictive behaviours
- Less effective professionally
- Reduced Empathy



Coping Mechanism

- Coping mechanisms are ways to which external or internal stress is managed, adapted to or acted upon
- As humans we continue to strive to make sense of our world, make our lives easier and more manageable



Unhealthy coping mechanisms

- Self-sacrificing
- Denial
- Minimisation
- Rationalisation
- Unhealthy Addictions
- Catastrophising
- Passive-aggressive behaviours
- Isolation



Prolonged stress

increase possibility of disease!

Unhealthy coping mechanisms DO NOT reduce stress!



Disease of modern civilisation

- **Asthma** — 1 in 10 people in Australia (over 2 million)
- **Atherosclerosis**
 - Heart disease and stroke - 30% of all deaths
 - Diabetes – doubled in 30 yrs. 1/3 of young people will develop diabetes
- **Obesity** — 63% Adults. 25% children
- **Cancers** (many forms)
- **Allergies** - 20% of population affected
- **Depression & Anxiety** — 45% of people will experience
- **Addictions** — increasing each year for some drugs/alcohol: Ice more than doubled



Kaluli tribe

- Prof. Stephen Ilardi
 - Kaluli Tribe
 - Papua New Guinea
 - Pop 2000
 - No known modern civilisation diseases found
 - Difficult lives
 - Infant mortality rate
 - Parasitic diseases
 - Tribal Wars



**So what are healthy coping
mechanism?**



I. Sunlight

- 31% of Australian population are Vitamin D deprived
- 10000-15000 units per day
- 15-30 mins
- Increases production of Serotonin

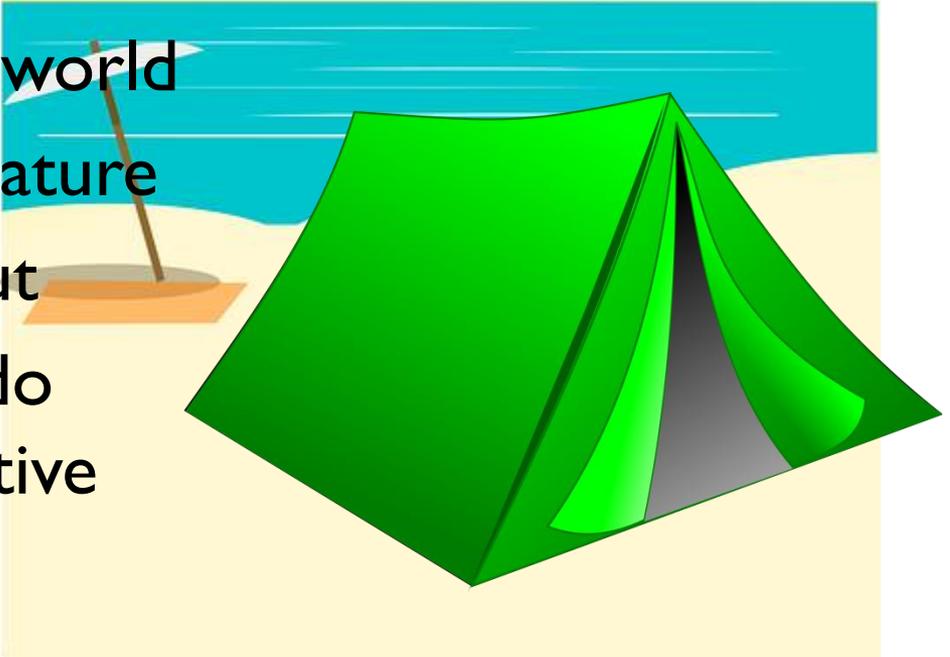
2. Movement

- Exercise is not normal
- Movement is Medicine
 - Increase in dopamine and serotonin
 - Mental sharpening
 - Anti-depressive effects
 - Movement where your heartbeat increases is great
 - 30 mins 3x week
 - Make it fun



3. Connection to Earth

- Combines Sunlight and Movement
- Being outside
- Taking in your world
- Experiencing nature
- Having time out
- Anything you do outside is positive



4. Connection to Self

- Do:
 - Mindfulness
 - Vicarious Trauma
 - Your Thoughts
 - Your Emotions
 - Your Relationships
 - Practice time-out
 - Have hobbies and interests outside of work
 - Continue to build self-esteem
 - Gives you energy back



5. Connection to Others

- Be honest when you are not coping
- Ask for help
- Ask for supervision
- Build pro-social relationships
- Spend time with family and/or friends
- Debriefing is vital
- Do Professional Development



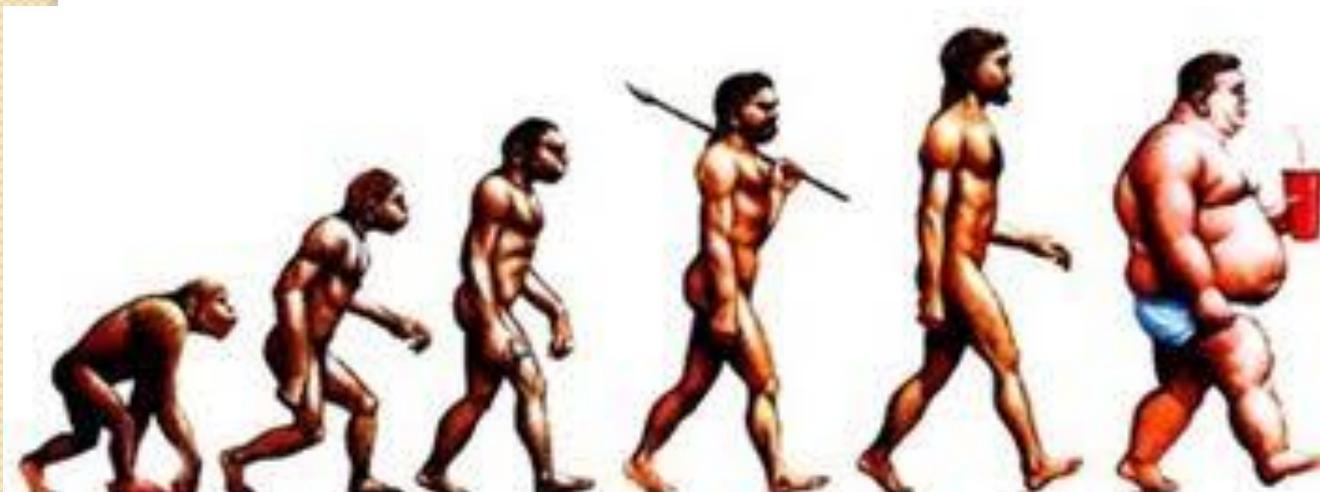
6. Sleep

- Sleep deprivation can lead to higher risk of chronic health problems like high blood pressure, heart disease, and stroke.
- 1.2 million people have sleep disorders
- In Australia, sleep disorders underlie 9.1% of work-related injuries, 8.3% of depression, 7.6% of non work-related motor vehicle accidents, 2.9% of diabetes, 0.9% of kidney disease and 0.6% of cardiovascular disease
- Very important self-care
- Good sleep hygiene is vital



7. Nutrition

- A depressed brain is a inflamed brain
- Brain is 60% made out of fat
- Essential Fats
 - Omega 6s
 - Pro-inflammatory
 - Omega 3s
 - Anti-inflammatory
- Growing evidence that nutrition has an effect on disease on Civilisation



How can we assist patients more effectively

- We never really can put ourselves in other people's shoes
 - Unconditional positive regard
 - Listen
- Being curious
 - Motivational Interviewing
- Role reversal
- Talk about the 7 steps to self-care

