

Supporting the Caregivers in Your Midst: Developing Support Groups for Caregivers Who Care for Long-Term Patients (Alzheimer's, dementia, chronic care)

Brooke Collison, PhD and Bob Lewis, MS, LMFT.

The session presenters have skills in the area of group process. For the past year and a half, Brooke has been facilitator of a small group of caregivers who meet twice a month. Bob is a marriage and family therapist who has stepped aside from his professional practice and has served as full-time caregiver for his mother-in-law and father-in-law for the past three years.

With church congregations tending to be above average in age, the frequency of long-term caregiving situations increases. Alzheimer's disease dementia, and other cognitive debilitating conditions are becoming more common among aging populations. The persons (usually a family member) who provide either partial- or full-time care will find that caregiving is a demanding role. Caregivers, more often female than male, have been found to suffer from health issues related to caregiving and mortality rates among caregivers is elevated.

The presenters believe that among any group of older-than-average persons, there will be those with knowledge of or experience with caregiving. The presenters will describe how a caregiver support group can function and will use a quick survey of participants to determine immediate needs for caregiving.

Topics will emerge from the quick participant summary, but the presenters will also present an information or topic outline for caregiver groups based on their experience with an ongoing caregiver group operating in the Corvallis First United Methodist Church which will include the following:

1. WHEN GRIEF GETS A HEAD START
2. FORMING A CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUP
3. ROLE CHANGES
4. CAREGIVERS' AND CARE RECEIVERS' BELIEFS: SEARCHING FOR COMMON MEANING
5. THE NATURE OF HELP: ASKING, GIVING, RECEIVING, DECLINING
6. ANGER IN THE LIFE OF A CAREGIVER
7. ADVOCACY: THE POSITIVE OUTCOME OF CORRECTLY AIMED ANGER
8. DIFFICULT SITUATIONS
9. DIFFICULT DECISIONS
10. THINGS I'D RATHER NOT TALK ABOUT: SEX, MONEY, DEATH, AND DRUGS