



Keep it in Perspective Handout

As a caregiver, do you sometimes find it hard to keep things in perspective? Do you struggle with thinking the worst when caring for your loved one and jump to the worst-case scenario? Do you blow things out of proportion? This is very common among caregivers. Our topic for today is catastrophizing. We will talk about what it is, why it is common among caregivers, the challenges it creates, and good solutions to cope with it.

What is catastrophizing?

- Catastrophizing is a common thought trap or cognitive/thought distortion.
- Thought traps or cognitive distortions are automatic, irrational, biased and inaccurate thoughts.
- Catastrophizing is jumping to the worst case, unlikely scenario in a difficult situation, and can worsen stress and anxiety.

Examples of Catastrophizing:

- Your loved one gets ill, and you jump to “he or she is going to die” or “he or she is never going to recover”.
- A family member was supposed to give you a break to get your hair done, and they cancel, you think “I’m never going to get a break”.
- You may struggle with paying a bill on time and magnify the situation to “we’re going to lose the house”. Does any of this sound familiar as a caregiver?

Important to note: You are not alone! Catastrophizing is common and human.

Reasons Caregivers are Prone to Catastrophizing:

- Thought distortions in general, are common when someone is under stress or is in a difficult situation.
- Caregiving is a difficult job, and you as caregivers, are often under a lot of stress.
- Unique stressors of caregiving
 - Many caregivers experience isolation.
 - The change in roles
 - Caring for Veterans with a variety of complex medical and mental health diagnoses
 - Caring for Veterans with chronic pain



Tools to Keep Things in Perspective

- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy/Individual therapy
- Thought Record
- Mindfulness/visualization
- Challenging Thoughts
 - Compassionate restructuring/Self compassion
 - Putting thought on trial
- Interrupt negative thought-Do something positive!
- Sit with the discomfort: "I am having an irrational thought, and I do not need to act on it."
- Self-care and taking time for yourself.
- Thought Stopping
- Focusing on Positive Outcomes rather than negative.
- Positive Affirmations
- Reach out for help!