

Assessing the Impact of Lifespan's "Unlocking Joy in Dementia Caregiving" Workshop Series on Caregiving Skills, Emotional and Mental Health of Caregivers

Anusha Amaravathi

Lifespan Partners: Ms. Jessie Gyr, Ms. Katy Allen and Mr. Paul Caccamise

URMC Partners: Dr. Green, Ms. Settle and Dr. Fiscella



INTRODUCTION

Alzheimer's disease is the leading cause of dementia in the United States. Individuals with this disease have symptoms ranging from getting lost in familiar surroundings to having trouble communicating with others. Understanding these symptoms, we can appreciate that caregiving for individuals with Alzheimer's is very difficult. Caregivers of dementia patients are found to be more stressed than non dementia caregivers. Additionally, a study done by Amazon's MTurk Organization showed that there was a 53.1% increase in caregiving burden in dementia caregivers due to the stresses of the pandemic. As caregiver burden for dementia patients is significant, it is important to address how this burden can be reduced. The goal of the project was to assess the impact of Lifespan's "Unlocking Joy in Dementia Caregiving" series on caregiver skills, the emotional and mental health of caregivers in a short term and long term manner.

COMMUNITY PARTNER

Lifespan is a local non-profit organization in Rochester that provides unbiased information and over 30 services to older adults and their caregivers in the Monroe County and beyond. Their "Unlocking Joy in Dementia Caregiving" series is a four-week virtual series that helps caregivers by teaching strategies to strengthen connections with their care receivers and reflect on moments of happiness during caregiving. We collaborated with Lifespan to design and distribute surveys to assess the impact of this series on caregiver skills, the emotional and mental health of caregivers.

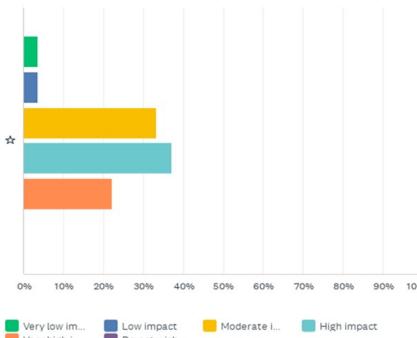
COMMUNITY HEALTH IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

Pre and post surveys were created to assess how the participants felt about different aspects of caregiving before and after Lifespan's "Unlocking Joy in Dementia Caregiving" series. These surveys were distributed to 13 participants in the series and 5 participants completed the pre and post surveys. Past participants were surveyed to assess the long-term impact of the series. These individuals took the series anytime in between October 2020 to August 2021. 47 past participants were contacted and 27 partook in the survey. The surveys were conducted through SurveyMonkey.

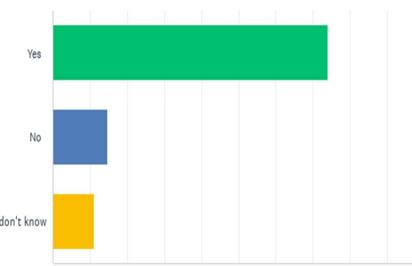
In the pre and post surveys, there was an improvement of scores seen in across all areas of caregiving in the survey. The highest improvement in scores were in terms of how prepared participants felt in creating an action plan for caregiving, communicating their concerns and coping with guilt. The least improvement in scores were in areas of coping with anger and being resilient.

For the long-term impact surveys, 60% of the participants stated that the class had a very high or high impact on their caregiving. Additionally, 77.77% stated they felt more resilient and 74% stated they felt better prepared to find joy in caregiving after the class. Moreover, 70% of them shared the information that they learnt from the class with their family and friends which meant that the information taught in our series was reaching to a wider audience than just our participants. Additionally, 77% were very likely to recommend the class to others which stresses the excellent teaching and support they received during the class.

How would you say this series has impacted your caregiving?



Do you feel better prepared to find joy in caregiving?



CONCLUSIONS

In terms of short-term impact of the "Unlocking Joy in Dementia Caregiving" series, the participants really showed an improvement after the series in how they felt in creating an action plan for caregiving, communicating their concerns and feelings to others. Regarding long-term impact surveys, the participants felt the class had a high impact on them especially in areas of asking for help, communication, finding joy and resiliency. In addition, they were sharing information learnt from class with others that widens the outreach of the series.

In terms of limitations, there were only 5 participants who completed the pre and post surveys out of the 13 participants which could have impacted the range of results we received in the pre and post surveys. We hope to increase compliance in the future.

IMPACT AND SUSTAINABILITY

For future surveys, it would be beneficial to call participants for the pre and post surveys so we can assist individuals who have difficulty filling out the surveys online. Additionally, from the long-term data gathered, 11% of participants stayed connected with other caregivers after the series. Lifespan is moving to create the series in person to foster stronger connection between caregivers to have a community even after the series ends.

In terms of sustainability, the series will be evaluated continuously by the Lifespan staff as they plan to integrate the surveys as part of the regular class materials. The data gathered will help series become more sustainable as they make the series more evidence based.

In terms of impact of the series in the community, many participants were grateful for the community of caregivers they found through the series. They were relieved to find strategies through the series to become better caregivers and truly find joy in caregiving.