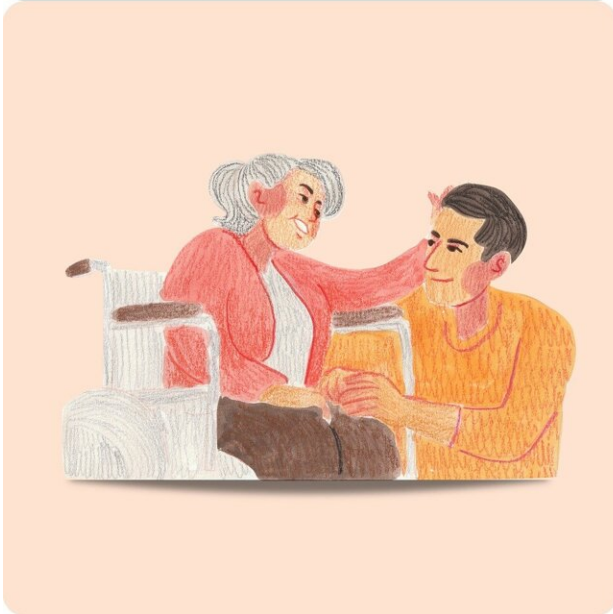
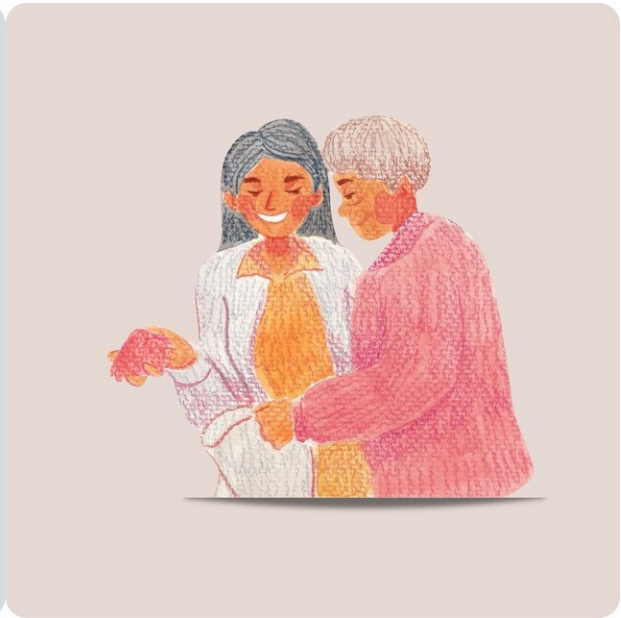


Study: CARES intervention reduces stress for family caregivers of older adults with dementia

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According to the [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), 80% of those living with dementia receive informal care from family members or friends. This equates to 16 million family caregivers in the U.S. However, caring for family members with dementia is often

associated with increased caregiver burden (which includes emotional, physical, and financial strain), stress, and worse physical health for the caregiver.

A recent study [published](#) in the *Journal of Applied Gerontology*, led by George Mason University researchers, found that a 9-week online stress management intervention program for [family caregivers](#) reduced burden scores by 15% for 97 family caregivers of older adults living with [dementia](#). The Stress-Busting Program for Family Caregivers TM, intervention was specifically designed to help family caregivers with managing their own stress when caring for older adults living with dementia or a chronic illness

"In this study, we found evidence of a range in average caregiver burden levels based on the dementia severity category of care recipients. The findings show that an online Zoom intervention in a peer group setting can be beneficial for family caregivers of [older adults](#) with mild, moderate, or severe dementia," said Catherine Tompkins, principal investigator, professor of social work, and associate dean of faculty and staff affairs in the College of Public Health.

The intervention provided family caregivers with education and strategies to manage stress when caring for someone living with dementia. Examples of self-care techniques included breathing and meditation; troubleshooting behaviors associated with dementia; and peer-to-[peer support](#) within a virtual group setting.

"Reducing caregiver burden and managing stress are critical to the well-being of families. These findings show that effective [stress](#) management interventions for family caregivers can be facilitated through online peer groups," said Gilbert Gimm, first author and associate professor of

health administration and policy.

Co-authors include George Mason Associate Professor Megumi Inoue, Professor Emily Ihara, Mason CARES Project Manager Shannon Layman, and Master of Social Work alumna graduate Harveen Pantleay. This study was supported by a grant (#2021048) from the Retirement Research Foundation (RRF).

The study is part of a larger project, entitled Mason CARES (Caregivers Aiming for Resilience, Empowerment, and Support), that implemented and assessed interventions for family caregivers.

More information: Gilbert Gimm et al, Mason Caregivers Aiming for Resilience, Empowerment, and Support Study: Assessing Family Caregiver Burden Post-Intervention, *Journal of Applied Gerontology* (2024). [DOI: 10.1177/07334648241243173](https://doi.org/10.1177/07334648241243173)

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