



INTIMACY

FAMILY FACT SHEET #4

Appreciating the demands that the illness and disability of a relative can place on a caregiver is what the MPPC Program is all about.

Caregiving responsibilities often alter close family relationships in important ways. Remember that there can be a hidden cost to caregiving. It is measured in emotional exchange. It is a price one pays when illness or disability disrupts family patterns and someone is deprived of the comfortable intimacy he or she previously enjoyed.

Important principles to remember

- The roles of family caregivers are altered.
- For most of us, work and independence are the foundation of our self-esteem. For most individuals with chronic illness who are in need of intimate care, self-esteem suffers greatly.
- Not only does the caregiver take on added roles in the family, but they are confronted with a troubling new perspective on those for whom they provide care. The tower of strength in their lives may be gone or profoundly changed.

Loss of sexual and emotional intimacy is not uncommon

- Sexual intimacy gets lost in many caregiving situations.
- Givers and receivers of care alike need the emotional support that comes from hugging, touching, holding, and kissing. Everyone suffers when this sort of intimacy is lost.
- A touch can convey compassion, not just sexual interest. Touch can also convey reassurance, safety, or relaxation, among other things.

The power of touch and intimacy

- Touch establishes connection between partners and eliminates the perception that the recipient of care is untouchable.
- Caregivers have a great opportunity to enhance the well-being of their loved ones by being more conscious of the power that they hold in their fingertips.

FAMILY CAREGIVING TIP

If issues of intimacy are part of the challenge of your caregiving relationship, you may find it helpful to speak with your physician. And remember that the MPPC Care Specialist is also an important professional to turn to in addressing the emotional challenges that can accompany the responsibilities of caregiving.

**For more information call your Area Agency on Aging
1-877-353-3771**

Maine Primary Partners in Caregiving (MPPC) is a joint project of the Eastern Agency on Aging and the University of Maine Center on Aging, in partnership with Aroostook Area Agency on Aging, Eastern Maine Medical Center, Horizons Health Service, Indian Township Tribal Health Center, Norumbega Medical Rosscare, and Senior Spectrum.