

POWERFUL TOOLS FOR CAREGIVERS

By Michele Hendrix

The Powerful Tools for Caregivers program is an evidenced-based, self-care education program which provides tools and strategies to better handle the unique challenges caregivers face.

You are a Caregiver...If you are responsible for assisting a family member, loved one, or friend with meeting the demands of a chronic illness or disability.

Studies have shown that caregivers:

- Use 71% more prescription drugs
- Have a higher rate of depression
- Have 46% more physician visits
- Become isolated
- Have a 63% higher mortality rate than non-caregivers of the same age

Powerful Tools for Caregivers (PTC) and all materials were developed over 3 years of pilot testing, refinement and evaluative research to assess the program's effectiveness. Initiated through grant funding, the program has been offered since 1998. Currently 2,200 Class Leaders have been trained in 36 states. Since the program's inception, Powerful Tools for Caregivers materials have reached over 70,000 caregivers.

PTC is based on the highly successful Chronic Disease Self-Management Program developed by Dr. Kate Lorig and her colleagues at Stanford University. PTC is a national program sustained by extensive collaborations with community-based organizations.

What does the PTC program cover?

In the six weekly classes, caregivers develop a wealth of self-care tools to:

- reduce personal stress
- change negative self-talk
- communicate their needs to family members and healthcare or service providers
- practice relaxation techniques
- reduce guilt, anger and depression
- make tough caregiving decisions
- set goals and problem-solve

Class participants also receive a copy of [*The Caregiver Helpbook*](#), developed specifically for the class. This book is also an excellent stand-alone resource for those who are unable to attend the 6-week class series and is available for sale on the website: www.powerfultoolsforcaregivers.org

The second edition also includes information about hiring in-home help, long-distance caregivers, driving issues, sensory changes, elder abuse, and end-of-life issues.

Research and Outcomes

In the years since the program began, a great deal of research, evaluation and revision has been done to ensure its continued value and success. The 6-week PTC class has been shown to have a positive impact on caregiver health for a diverse group of caregivers including rural, ethnic minorities, adult children of aging parents, well-spouses/partners, caregivers at differing stages in their caregiving role, living situations, financial and educational backgrounds. The program is available in English, Spanish, and Korean. Data from class participant evaluations indicates the PTC program significantly improves:

- Self-Care Behaviors: (increased exercise, use of relaxation techniques, medical check ups)
- Management of Emotions: (reduced guilt, anger, and depression)
- Self-efficacy (increased confidence in coping with caregiving demands)
- Use of Community Resources: (increased utilization of community services)

National Recognition

In 2007, PTC received the National Family Caregiver Award for innovation, responsiveness and effectiveness from the National Alliance for Caregiving and the MetLife Foundation. In 2009, PTC received the Network of Multicultural Aging Excellence Award from the American Society on Aging/AARP. In 2012, the PTC program was recognized by the Administration on Aging as having met its highest level criteria for evidenced-based programs.

For more information about the Powerful Tools for Caregivers program, Six Week Caregiver Class Series or Class Leader Training, please contact the Powerful Tools for Caregivers website: www.powerfultoolsforcaregivers.org; or Michele Shultz Hendrix, Licensed Master Trainer, Powerful Tools for Caregivers, 1004 West Mill Street, New Braunfels, TX 78130. Phone (832) 731-6127, or email: tmichelehendrix@icloud.com. Class Leader trainings throughout the country will be listed on the PTC website.

Ms. Michele Hendrix served as President of POAMN, and is a Master Trainer for Powerful Tools for Caregivers. She has worked for over 25 years to advocate, educate, involve, and motivate people in the process of aging and self-care; and to recognize the connections among church, health care, non-profit, community, state, federal, and local agencies while encouraging adults of all ages in managing their self-care, chronic conditions, respite, and caregiving roles. Michele has focused her work on intergenerational and interfaith programs for adults, evidence-based health promotion, ministry programming and development, respite for caregivers, and fall-prevention programs. She is currently working as an independent contractor, trainer, and workshop leader for AGE of Central Texas/CaregiverU, health care systems, faith based organizations, churches, senior centers, aging networks, and non-profits. Concentrating her efforts to provide programs and resources to partnerships, continuous quality improvement, and ministry and program development to meet the needs of aging seniors and boomers with an emphasis on caregiving and respite care.