

## Key MHPSS messages that can be shared with Caregiver of older people

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#### What you might be experiencing and feeling?

- You may become upset or angry more than you used to, and your mood may change suddenly.
- You may feel nervous, depressed, worried, or overwhelmed.
- You may have repeated vivid memories of the earthquake, aftershocks, and aftermath. These memories can cause reactions in your body such as a rapid heartbeat or sweating.
- You may find it difficult to concentrate or make decisions or become more easily confused.
- Your sleep and eating patterns may also be disrupted.
- All these things may affect how you are looking after yourself and/or caring for older family members.
- Remember that older family members may be also feeling worried, anxious, confuse and upset
- All these different feelings, emotions and reactions are normal reactions to a very distressing experience.
- **Remember, these reactions are normal in stressful times.** It does not necessarily mean you need to see a psychologist or a psychiatrist, or that you need medication. Most people, including older people, can cope and recover well if they feel safe, if their basic needs are met, and if they have care, attention, and support from loved ones and/or friends/community.

#### How you can take care of yourself.

- Remember, you do not have to be a perfect caregiver every day. In this difficult time supporting your older family members with their basic needs can be a challenge. Try to find out where you can get support and information.
- Recognise that this is a challenging time for everyone, and that older people can often react to stressful events in different ways and it's important to be patient and understanding. Some common reactions include physical problems like headaches, stomach aches and changes to appetite. Also changes in mood and behaviour.
- Recognise that you are not alone in what you are experiencing and feeling.
- Allow yourself and the people around you to mourn any losses you have experienced.
- Accept help & support from friends, relatives, helpers from those who offer it.
- Connect with friend/family members as often as you can.
- Look after yourself as much as possible and try to rest when you can.
- If there are other adults you can trust around you, try to share caring responsibilities so that each of you has some time to rest and do other things.
- As much as you can, try to keep your usual routines, such as regular mealtimes and bedtimes.
- Try to maintain any spiritual, religious, or cultural activities that bring you comfort.
- Remember that looking after yourself will help make you stay stronger and better able to look after the people you care about.

#### What you can do to support the older person in your care.

- Older people can cope better, manage better when they feel they can help others. It makes them feel needed and important.

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- Acknowledge how hard this time is for them. Take time to listen to them and try to understand what they have experienced.
- Knowing what is going to happen and sharing information can help older people feel safer, give them a sense of control, and reduce feelings of uncertainty and confusion.
- Allow older people some privacy and quiet time if it is safe and possible to do so.
- At the same time try to encourage them to connect/reconnect with friends/other family members if possible. Check in on how they are feeling after they do.
- Allow and encourage older people take some control and responsibility for their daily routine and try to involve them in decisions that affect them.
- Encourage and support older people to become (more) involve in community and/or help others where possible. Helping others can give them a sense of power and self-worth, which are important for wellbeing.
- Remember that during these difficult times there will be some good days and some bad days for everyone.
- If you are feeling angry or frustrated with an older family member, take some time to step away and cool down. Once feeling more in control speak to them later when you are feeling more calm. This will help you to keep the relationship respectful and helpful.

### When to look for extra help.

#### Consider looking for support from a professional if the older family member:

- has stress reactions that are severe.
- is unable to carry out their usual daily activities due to their distress.
- is harming themselves or talking about harming themselves.
- is having an increasingly difficult time relating to friends and family.
- is experiencing terrifying memories, nightmares, or flashbacks about the event.
- increasingly avoids things that remind them of the distressing event.
- has stress reactions that are getting worse instead of better over time.