

Introduction

The *Powerful Tools for Caregivers* (PTC) program and all materials were developed by Legacy Caregiver Services, in Portland, Oregon 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 for over 8 years. PTC is a six-week education program that helps family caregivers of older adults to develop and practice self-care "tools" to thrive as individuals while managing caregiving responsibilities. In the six 2½ hour 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 and service providers; communicate more effectively in challenging situations; recognize the "messages in their emotions" and how to deal with difficult feelings; and make tough caregiving decisions - e.g., when a family member can no longer live alone, drive safely, or manage his or her finances. Caregivers also receive *The Caregiver Helpbook*, developed specifically for the class. Classes are held at locations such as churches and community centers and are taught by pairs of trained facilitators who use a standardized curriculum that employs a variety of teaching strategies, including didactic presentations, group discussion, brainstorming, modeling, role-playing, and action plans.

To sustain the program post-grant, multiple collaborations and partnerships of varying levels of commitment have been developed with staff at organizations like the Cooperative Extension System, Area Agencies on Aging, AARP, and Parish Nurses. Cost varies with the level of commitment.

Innovation

PTC is exclusively focused on self-care of the family caregiver, not on the care receiver. PTC has a unique, proven ability to increase a caregiver's self-efficacy, better manage emotions, increase self-care behaviors, and utilize community resources. The program incorporates weekly action plans, which serve to build confidence in being able to practice self-care behaviors. Initially developed for caregivers of older adults, PTC has been found to benefit all caregivers of adult chronically ill and shows great promise to other populations, such as caregivers of disabled children.

Impact

Thus far, over 1,000 Class Leaders in 23 states have been trained to deliver PTC in community-based settings. Class Leaders have taught PTC to more than 15,000 caregivers. Based on research evaluation, significant outcomes are documented at 6 and 12 months after classes. PTC 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, caregivers in different stages of caregiving, living situations, financial and educational backgrounds. Data from class participant evaluations indicates: significant improvement in behaviors: increased exercise, use of relaxation techniques and health self-care; improved emotions, including reduced anger, guilt, and depression; increased self-efficacy; and increased use of community services. Since the program's inception, over 50,000 copies of *The Caregiver Helpbook* have been distributed.

Basis in Research

PTC utilized extensive caregiver and self-efficacy literature review. It employs adult learning principles combined with the principles of self-efficacy pioneered by Dr. Kate Lorig's widely acclaimed chronic disease self-management model. Developed out of a series of 10 focus groups with diverse groups of caregivers, PTC was pilot-tested and refined in Oregon. Subsequently, comprehensive evaluations of outcomes have been completed among hundreds of PTC participants in separate studies conducted in Oregon (Boise, Congleton & Shannon, 2005) and Illinois (Kuhn, Fulton & Edelman, 2003). Positive outcomes for caregivers are consistently reported in pre-class, post-class, 6- and 12-month comparisons of diverse caregivers.

Diversity

Initiated with funding from The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, PTC has undergone extensive testing in rural and minority communities. Because the program utilizes a variety of different teaching techniques including small and large group discussion and making action plans, caregivers are able to individualize the program and adapt it to their culture. The program emphasizes the importance of class leader modeling and co-leaders are often from the community (e.g. rural, ethnically diverse, etc.) they serve. Pilot testing and continuing use of the curriculum have shown that the curriculum did not need cultural modification. PTC materials are available in both English and Spanish and parts of the curriculum have been translated into Korean, Vietnamese, Chinese and Portuguese. Currently we are working towards the expansion and any necessary modification of the program to serve Native American caregivers, employed caregivers, and grandparents raising grandchildren.

Replication

PTC is disseminated by its train-the-trainer model scripted curriculum by offering affordable Class Leader and Master Trainer trainings to a variety of health and human service agencies. All program materials are given to the leaders at these trainings. These agencies replicate and sustain the program through statewide networks, thereby expanding the number of caregivers served. Class Leaders have been trained in 23 states. The goal of the program is to expand the program in all states, with Master Trainers in each to provide the capacity to replicate the program through their own networks.