Promoting Positive Caregiving

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AARP Meditations for Caregiving
Today’s Talk

- Caregiving in America
- Strains and gains
- Keys to positive caregiving
Family Caregiving in America

- 40 M Americans engage in some form of caregiving activity in a year (NAC/AARP, 2015)
- Numbers increasing because of demographics, medical advances
But caregivers and their reactions to caregiving are highly varied:

- 38% highly stressed
- 45% somewhat stressed
- 16% not at all stressed
Most Stressed Caregivers

- Spousal Caregivers
- Dementia Caregivers
- Military Caregivers
Research on Caregiving’s Negative Effects

- Dementia caregiving linked with 63% increased mortality (Schulz & Beach, JAMA, 1999)
- Schulz & Martire, 2004:
  - Insomnia
  - Depression and anxiety
  - Musculoskeletal problems (e.g., back pain)
- Decreased use of preventative medical services
Research on Caregiving’s Positive Effects

- AP-NORC 2017 survey of 1000 caregivers:
  - 95% said caregiving was worthwhile
  - (77% said it was stressful)
“When I wake up, I make the decision to speak in a joyous voice, to nurture positive energy, and to make this a good day.”

“[The disease] is not something to be afraid of; the more you know, the more empowered you become.”
Bettyville

- "I know this home is just for now, but I treasure our days. I feel different than when I arrived because I have come through for her. It has taken me so long to feel okay in my own skin, but I feel better, more at home in the world. Most days."
“The majority of caregivers...readily endorse caregiving gains or positive aspects of caregiving [including] having the opportunity to serve as a role model, having the chance to give back to care recipients..., experiencing an enhanced sense of purpose..., feeling appreciated, and helping to maintain the identity and well-being of the family (Coon, 2012, p. 233)
Caregiving brings “strains and gains”

How do we minimize its strains and maximize its gains in order to make this a more positive experience?