



text: 陈映蓁
yingzhen@sph.com.sg

健康
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照护的压力非同小可，越来越多照护者学习正念，希望对自己和亲人有一定帮助。

正念心理学家解释正念的效益，以及如何在日常生活中练习正念，促进身心健康。



受访专家：
林俊杰
仁中心心理学家

正念 减压

照护者除了要给自己按下“暂停”键，也应该抽空与家人交谈，坦白告知自己面对的压力来源。(iStock)

抗照护倦怠

助改善沟通方法 照护者上正念课

正念 (mindfulness)，又称静观，简单说是专注于当下的状态，有意识地察觉并体验当下的注意力，想法和感受，从而找到平静。

百仁中心 (Brahm Centre) 的正念心理学家林俊杰本身就是照护者；他的父亲曾中风，并患上血管型失智症 (vascular dementia)，林俊杰确切感受到正念对于照护者的帮助。他将在本月举行的亚太正念 (静观) 大会分享自己的经验，工作坊主题是“应用正念助看护者减压”。

林俊杰说：“工作坊的目标是通过正念练习改善照护者的情绪健康，照护者将从中学会正念和自我照顾的重要。正念有助看护者加强对于当下的觉知，并且学习如何回应 (respond) 生活中

中发生的事，而不是做出反应 (react)。”

他指出，我国的照护者估计超过21万名，“照护倦怠” (caregiver burnout) 是越来越重要的课题，特别是身处疫情之际。“我希望让看护者知道，他们并非孤军作战。掌握一些技巧，就能授权给自己，更好地照顾自己，必要时也能寻求帮助。”

很多时候，照护者会在思考患者的未来时出现负面想法，并因此感受到压力。精神上的痛苦，加上照护者必须承受的生理负担，都会给身心健康造成负面影响。林俊杰说：“我们无法改变照护对象的健康状态，但正念有助于照护者更好地意识到采取哪些态度能让自己更好地照顾亲人，也更好地照顾自己。”

林俊杰在百仁中心教导的课程包括正念基础课、正念中级课以及正念减压课。据他观察，学员之中有越来越多照护者。例如为期八周的正念减压课曾有一家五口一起参与，包括父母、女儿和两个儿子。“由于亲人患病，影响了她的语言能力和行走能力，照顾她的家人都觉得压力很大。日常照护的压力进而影响了家人之间的感情，特别是在沟通方面。”

上了正念课，一家人不但感觉到压力不再那么大，而且学会如何改善沟通技巧，例如他们发言前会选择更恰当的时机，也比较愿意聆听其他人的想法。“他们也可以辨识出大脑什么时候会‘跳跃’到不确定的未来，正念练习有助他们把自己‘拉回’当下，从而改善照护素质。”

他解释：“正念能帮助照护者更好地意识到身体的感觉、内心的感受，还有自己的想法和冲动。有了这份意识，就能选择不要被这些冲动或反应所‘绑架’，改而有意识地选择停下来，不要马上反应。如此一来，照护者就能重新回到当下，把焦点放在自己能做的事，而不是被未来的不确定因素所困扰。”

“能够意识到大脑的一些习惯，例如担忧或反复思考，往往就有助于引导自己回到当下，当下最重要。”

此外，林俊杰希望照护者记得：照护对象的行为可能带来照护挑战，但对方始终是一样的他/她；让人困扰的行为只是病症的后果，那不应该影响我们对他的爱。“即便面对困难，我们还是应该珍惜这些时刻，因为事情会变，困难的时期也不会一直持续。”

把正念融入日常

5 对策消除照护者压力

“回到当下”是否听起来太抽象？林俊杰详细解释如何把正念融入日常生活的具体做法，提醒照护者千万不能忽略自我照顾。

▶ 每天都要经常给自己按下暂停键。停下自己正在做的事，闭上眼，注意身体各部位的感受，以及自己的情绪和想法。专心呼吸，至少在吸气和呼气三次后，才轻轻张开双眼，把意识拉回当下的时刻。

▶ 抽空与其他家人交谈，坦白告知自己面对的压力来源。

▶ 保持态度中立，避免对照护对象产生批判性想法；有意识地注意哪些想法其实无济于事，有助于加强同理心，也给对方提供更好的照顾。

此外，下列两个做法能与正念相辅相成，加强减压功效。

▶ 外出散步。

▶ 从事自己喜欢的活动，或是任何能够滋养自己身心的事。

林俊杰说：“照护是深具意义的旅程，我们应该专注于当下，并以中立，不带批判的态度接受自己经验的一切。我们不会知道接下来会发生什么改变，所以每一个当下都应该全情投入。”

*今年的亚太正念 (静观) 大会将在线上举行，日期是8月14日至29日，部分研讨会与工作坊以华语进行。有兴趣者请浏览活动官网 (<https://asiapacificmindfulnessconference.com/apmc2021-cnsg/>)。

保健
百分百

Mindfulness reduces caregiver burnout

Wanbao, 8 Aug 2021 (English translation)

Caregiver stress cannot be underestimated. More and more caregivers are taking up mindfulness courses to help themselves and their families.

Mindfulness psychologist explains the benefits of mindfulness and how to practise mindfulness in daily life to improve mental and physical well-being.

Mindfulness simply put, is to focus on the present and observing and experiencing the thoughts and feelings to find peace.

Brahm Centre mindfulness psychologist Eric Lim is a caregiver himself. His late father had stroke and vascular dementia and Eric Lim has experienced the benefits of mindfulness as a caregiver. He will be sharing his experience with the workshop topic on “Reducing Caregiver Stress” at the Asia Pacific Mindfulness Conference later this month.

Eric Lim says, “The objective of the workshop is to help caregivers improve their emotional regulation through mindfulness and the importance of mindfulness and self-care. Mindfulness can help caregivers to be more present, learn how to respond, rather than react, to whatever that happens in their lives.”

He pointed out that with an estimated number of over 210,000 caregivers in Singapore, caregiver burnout is increasingly an important issue not to be dismissed, especially in the current pandemic. “I want to reach out to caregivers out in our society, let them know that they are not alone in this journey and that they can learn skills to empower themselves for greater self-care and seek help if need.”

Caregivers often get stressed by negative thoughts about what the future may hold for their loved ones. The mental anguish, coupled with the physical strains of caregiving, can often take a toll on one’s physical and mental health. Eric says, “While one cannot change the condition of the care recipient, mindfulness can help caregivers become more aware of attitudes that can empower them to better care for their loved ones and themselves”.

Incorporating mindfulness in daily routine: 5 strategies to reduce caregiver stress

Does focusing on the present sounds abstract? Eric Lim explains in details how to incorporate mindfulness in one’s daily life and remind caregivers the importance of self-care.

- Taking regular pauses during the day by stopping whatever one is doing, closing the eyes, checking in with one’s body sensations, feelings and thoughts. Focusing on the 3 or more breaths. Gently opening the eyes when one is ready and bringing this expanded awareness to the present moment.
- Caregivers can choose to make time to communicate openly about their stressors with their family members.
- Adopting the attitude of being non-judgemental can support one to aware of their judgments towards the care recipient. By becoming aware of the unhelpful judgements can reduce the barrier to empathy and promote better quality of care to the care recipient.

In addition, below are two activities that complement mindfulness practice for stress reduction.

- Go for a walk outdoors
- Engage in hobbies or whatever that caregivers want to do that nourishes them

Eric Lim says, “Caregiving is a journey that can be meaningful when we stay present and be open to our experiences in a non-judging manner. Savour the moment while it lasts as we will never really know how things might change.”

This year’s Asia Pacific Mindfulness Conference will be held online from 14-29 August. Some of the webinars and workshops are conducted in Chinese. Interested parties can check out <https://asiapacificmindfulnessconference.com/apmc2021-cnsg/>

Attending mindfulness courses helps caregivers improve communication (Box story)

Eric Lim is a mindfulness trainer at Brahm Centre, conducting different mindfulness classes such as Mindfulness Foundation Course, Mindfulness Intermediate Course and Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Course. He has noticed an increasing number of caregivers attending mindfulness courses such as a family of 5 who attended the 8-week Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Course (mother, father, daughter and 2 sons). “The family felt stressed from caring for their mother who had a medical condition that affected speech patterns and mobility. The daily stressors from caregiving impacted the dynamics of the relationship within the family, especially in the area of communication.”

Through the mindfulness course, they felt less stressed and learnt techniques on improving communication. For example, choosing appropriate moments to speak and being open to listening. “They recognised moments when their minds leaped into the uncertain future. The mindfulness practices helped bring back to the present moment and this helped in the quality of care demonstrated to the care recipient.”

He explains, “Mindfulness can help caregivers become more aware of their body sensations, feelings, thoughts and impulses. With awareness, one can choose not to be hijacked by impulses and reactions, but instead make a conscious effort to pause and not react. This allows caregivers to reconnect to the present and focus on what they can do, instead of getting caught up with the uncertainties about the future of caregiving.”

“Becoming aware of the habits of the mind such as rumination or worrying, can often steer one back to the present moment that matters.”

In addition, Eric Lim hopes that caregivers remember: “The care recipient is still the same person despite whatever behavioural challenges he or she might pose. It is just a consequence of the illness, but that should not change our love for them. We should cherish those moments even if it is difficult — because things change and the difficult moments will not last all the time.”