

Caregiving Juggling Act



Object:

This activity will help participants visualize the many responsibilities of caregiving and help them understand why balancing caregiving with work can be difficult for many employees.

Items Needed:

Gather up to 15 balls of varying shapes and sizes.

Activity:

1. Recruit one class participant to be a “caregiver,” who will stand at the front of the room.
2. Call out a caregiving or work responsibility and toss a ball to the “caregiver.” Continue to toss balls (adding more responsibilities) until the caregiver is overwhelmed. Potential responsibilities include:
 - Iron clothes for the day
 - Pack lunch
 - Workday starts at 8:00 a.m.
 - Office meeting at 8:30 a.m.
 - Phone call from Mom about Medicare problem
 - Customer comes in to office to complain
 - Oil change
 - Make call to benefits specialist to help with Mom’s Medicare problem
 - Supervisor needs budget items ASAP
 - Newspaper printed wrong location for community event sponsored by your employer
 - Receive return call from benefits specialist about Mom’s Medicare problem
 - Eat lunch
 - Supervisor asks for correction to budget items
 - Internet server goes down
 - Mom calls to see if you have solved her Medicare problem

Reflection

Ask class participants to share their impressions of the activity. Make sure they have mentioned the importance of support systems (friends or family members) to help share the burden of caregiving. In addition, impress upon participants that, individually, the responsibilities are very manageable. However, when “all the balls come at once,” caregivers are often overburdened.

Adapted by Molly Spaulding, Family Living Educator, University of Wisconsin-Extension, October 2007.
From: *Caregiving Relationships: For People Who Care for Adults*. University of Illinois Extension. Amy Griswold, author. 2001.