



## **Stepping Back-Don't Take it Personally Handout**

As a caregiver, have you ever thought to yourself, "If I had only\_\_\_\_" ...fill in the blank? "If I had only not left them alone, they wouldn't have fallen." "If I only did not go to the movies, they wouldn't have had a panic attack." The focus of this group will be to talk about what personalizing is. We will talk about why this is common among caregivers. We will talk about the bad impacts of taking it personally. Finally, we will talk about what you can do to stop these harmful thoughts to improve your mood and actions.

### **What it means to take something personally:**

- It is very common for caregivers to blame themselves. They often feel responsible for their loved one's struggles that are out of their control.
- It is a common thought trap or thought distortion
- Thought distortions are knee-jerk, biased, untrue thoughts

### **Why caregivers can take things personally:**

- People take things personally when they are stressed.
- Caregiving is the most difficult job there is. You, as caregivers, are often under a lot of stress.
  - Being lonely
  - Problems with money
  - Change in roles
  - Being on "constant duty" without a break
  - Conditions that make it easy to take things personally
    - PTSD
    - Dementia
    - TBI

### **Some things that can happen if you take things personally:**

- Increase in worry and sadness
- Harmful to connection with your loved one
- Harmful to connection with others
- Not taking care of yourself
- Decline in physical health.



### **Ways you can help yourself:**

- Talking to a therapist
- Thought Record
  - Number one - Write down the situation. For example, "My loved one fell."
  - Number two - Write down the thoughts you had. For example, "If I was watching more carefully, my loved one wouldn't have fallen."
  - Number three - Write down the emotions you felt. For example, "I felt depressed or guilty about them falling."
  - Number four - Write down your behaviors. For example, "I couldn't bring myself to call my friend even though we were supposed to talk today."
  - Number five – Write down an alternate positive thought. For example: "I was doing my best, I can't prevent all bad things from happening."
- Challenge the thoughts you take personally:
  - Looking at situation through a self-caring lens
  - Think of what you would say to another person about the situation
  - Write down "evidence" for and against the thought.
- Change what you are doing to interrupt the negative thought
  - Take a walk
  - Call a friend
  - Listen to music
  - Plant flowers
  - Deep breathing
  - Do a craft or other activity you enjoy
- How to care for yourself:
  - Go for a hike
  - Take a bath
  - Listen to music
  - Talk to family/friend
  - Reach out for support/help