**Five Secrets Caregivers Wish Healthcare Professionals Knew**

How much do you know about the caregivers of your patients or clients? Here are 5 secrets caregivers of your patients are desperate for you to know:

**Secret #1:** They’re stressed…probably more than you think. Most caregivers are juggling multiple priorities and usually have little experience navigating the complexities of the healthcare system. While formal assessments like the Caregiver Strain Index and the Caregiver Reaction Scale can help you understand specific stressors they are facing, one simple question can quickly uncover their stress level. Ask the patient’s caregiver to assign a number to his or her stress level (0-low through 100 high).

**Secret #2:** They often feel stuck. Most caregivers report feeling like they don’t have a choice—caregiving is an obligation. They also often feel trapped with tunnel-vision about what a “good caregiver” is and feel like they have to live up to that image.

**Secret #3:** They are constantly being hit with surprises. There are often unrealistic expectations for how long the caregiving experience will last (usually longer than expected). Sticker shock occurs over what insurance, Medicare and Medicaid does not cover.

**Secret #4:** They feel their loved one’s situation is special. Of course healthcare professionals recognize that each patient and caregiver’s situation is unique. But caregivers appreciate when the healthcare professional acknowledges and validates the distinctive circumstances their family is facing.

**Secret #5:** They need us to be sensitive in the way we communicate with them. While we must be candid about healthcare information, it will benefit the caregiver as well as the patient if we are culturally and generationally sensitive in conversation. It’s also critical to break down technical healthcare terms and jargon into language the caregiver can grasp and apply to their loved one’s situation.

**Jennifer L. FitzPatrick, MSW, LCSW-C, CSP (Certified Speaking Professional) is a speaker, consultant, author and founder of Jenerations Health Education, Inc. One of less than 800 Certified Speaking Professionals worldwide, Jennifer is the author of Reimagining Customer Service in Healthcare and Cruising Through Caregiving: Reducing The Stress of Caring For Your Loved One. She was a gerontology instructor at Johns Hopkins University's Certificate on Aging program for over a decade and has been featured on ABC, CBS, Sirius XM and in *Forbes, U.S. News & World Report, Redbook, Fast Company* and countless other media outlets. Her board appointments include serving as a Care Advisory Board Member for Seth Rogen & Lauren Miller Rogen's non-profit HFC (Hilarity for Charity). For more information please go to** [**www.jenerationshealth.com**](http://www.jenerationshealth.com) **.**