Caring for Yourself While Caring for Others

Module 1: An Introduction to Homecare Health and Safety

Presenter’s Name

Host Organization
Welcome and Introductions

Please tell us

• Your name.
• Your role in homecare.
• How long have you worked in homecare?
• What body parts are strained by the work you do?
Four Areas of Risk in Homecare

1. Muscle and bone injuries, and strain.
2. Exposure risks.
3. Emotional and mental stress.
4. Emergency and personal safety.
Muscle/Bone Injuries and Strains

- Transferring clients.
- Carrying heavy loads, such as laundry, equipment, or other heavy items.
- Moving clients in bed.
- Lifting or moving furniture or other heavy objects.
- Bending and stretching while cleaning or helping clients with activities of daily living.
- Tripping in the home or walkways up to the home.
Exposure Risks

- Airborne germs.
- Body fluids.
- Needlesticks or sharps wounds.
- Cleaning agents.
- Pets.
- Latex.
- Second-hand smoke.
- Infestations of bugs.
- Too hot or cold temperatures.
Emotional and Mental Stresses

• Working many hours, trying to do too much in too little time.

• Grief related to clients or loved ones.

• Abusive and challenging interactions with clients or others in homes, and in personal life.

• Life stresses—finances, health, housing, transportation, childcare, or relationships.
Emergency and Personal Safety

- Fire, tornadoes, floods, hurricanes, electrical outages, and other events while at work.
- Driving to and from work.
- Dangers in the areas around homes.
- Violence in the homes.
Health and Safety is So Important Because …

- If you get injured or ill, you miss work, you lose income, and you can leave clients without support.
- Strained backs and muscles create more risk of hurting clients.
- Clients often worry about you when you are hurt.
Healthy and Safety is Also Important Because

- It’s painful—and stressful—to be sick, or to have sprains, strains, and broken bones.
- Getting injured or ill affects all aspects of your life.
- If you are sick, you can infect clients and others.
Homecare Workers May Put Their Health and Safety at Risk Because ...

- They hurry—trying to do too much in too little time.
- They don’t want to let clients down and need their wages, so they work when hurt or sick.
- They haven’t received training—or haven’t been trained enough—to know how to maintain their health and safety.
Workers’ Health and Safety May Also Be Put at Risk Because ...

• They put doing what clients want and need over their own health and safety.

• Clients want them to do things that aren’t safe or treat them in ways that are stressful, and they haven’t learned how to set healthy boundaries.
Tips for Staying Healthy and Safe on the Job

• Stay alert and get training (and never stop learning) about the four areas of risk:
  — Physical strains.
  — Exposures.
  — Stresses.
  — Physical and emergency safety.

• Speak up and listen constructively—out of respect for yourself and with respect for others. Talk with clients and supervisors to address concerns.
More Health and Safety Strategies...

- Use assistive devices if available—ask for them and help select them, if possible.
- Learn and use good body mechanics.
- Use Standard Precautions—especially gloves and hand-washing—to avoid exposures.
- Use approved containers for disposing of sharps and needles.
- Report concerns to clients and management immediately.
Take Care of Yourself

• Get sleep, exercise, and follow a healthy diet.
• Drive safely with your seat belt on, with no phones or distractions.
• Take time weekly to plan and care for your own well-being.
• Engage others in your life in helping you address stress—talk it over assertively.
Talk it Over!

- Plan the discussion.
- Be respectful—make a request, not a demand.

- Use “I” statements. Describe what you observe and how it affects you rather than blaming the other.
- Listen and see the issue from the other’s point of view.
- Consider several solutions beyond your first choice.
- Know your bottom line.
Thanks for participating!

Additional Resources:

• Homecare workers’ handbook: *Caring for Yourself While Caring for Others*.  

• NIOSH Hazard Review: “Occupational Hazards and Home Health Care.”  
Credits

- [Insert trainer and/or training organization’s name(s), and contact information here.]