

## Class Details

### **Class #1: Taking Care of You**

This class sets the stage for the entire course. It emphasizes that the focus is on you as a caregiver, not on the family member receiving care, and that caregivers will develop a self-care tool box. The challenges of caregiving are significant. Beginning in this class, caregivers make a weekly commitment to self-care.

### **Class #2: Identifying and Reducing Personal Stress**

Four steps are presented for effective stress management: (1) Identifying early warning signs, (2) Identifying personal sources of stress, (3) Accepting what you cannot change, and (4) Taking action. Tools to reduce stress are discussed. Participants learn how to change negative self-talk – which increases stress and erodes confidence – to positive self-talk. Beginning in this class, caregivers learn five relaxation activities that are easy to incorporate into their daily lives.

### **Class #3: Communicating Feelings, Needs, and Concerns**

Participants learn how to communicate their feelings, needs and concerns more effectively. Through brief dramatizations, participants experience the impact of both “I” messages and “You” messages (which tend to sound blaming and put people on the defensive). They practice changing “You” messages to “I” messages, and identifying when statements beginning with the word “I” are actually “Hidden You” messages.

### **Class #4: Communicating in Challenging Situations**

Participants practice two communication tools – assertiveness and Aikido – which are helpful in difficult situations. They learn a four-step process for using the assertive style of communication. With Aikido, participants learn how to align and find “common ground” with a person who is distressed.

### **Class #5: Learning From Our Emotions**

The overriding theme of this class is our emotions are messages we need to listen to. It emphasizes that feelings occur for a reason and that feelings are neither good nor bad. Focus is on identifying constructive ways for dealing with difficult feelings – especially anger, guilt, and depression – and resources for professional help.

### **Class #6: Mastering Caregiving Decisions**

Focus is on the internal emotional process caregivers go through when they experience a life change. Tools for dealing with changes and for making tough decisions – including a seven-step decision-making model and the family meeting – are discussed.

**For information about the PTC program: [www.powerfultoolsforcaregivers.org](http://www.powerfultoolsforcaregivers.org)**