Tips in coping with anticipatory grief for caregivers
What is anticipatory grief?

• Anticipatory grief is the grief response that we experience while our loved one is still with us.

• It often begins the moment when our loved one is diagnosed with illnesses such as dementia, cancer, or impending loss of physical functioning such as loss of eye-sight, amputation of lower or upper limbs etc.

• It can hurt and pain just as much as what we feel when our loved one passed on.
It is a tough journey!

From caregiver’s experience:

• “I am watching my loved one declining and cannot stop it.”

• “I still have the responsibility in carrying out my caregiving duty.”

• “I am feeling so much pain in my heart.”
Important to acknowledge & cope with our grief so as...

- To give us time in accepting the reality of our impending loss.

- To better manage self-care and our caregiving responsibility.

- To create positive opportunities with our loved one.

- To give us opportunities in fulfilling any unfinished business with our loved one.
What are the signs and symptoms?

Emotional

• Sadness – Losing our loved one little by little i.e. memory, personality, companionship etc.

• Anger and Frustration – Losing your freedom, encountering financial issues, coming to terms that you cannot change the outcome etc.

• Anxious and Fear – Uncertainty of what to expect as the illness progresses.
What are the signs and symptoms?

Emotional

- Guilt – Seeing loved one suffer and not knowing what to do.

- Sense of helplessness – With much time and energy spent caring for our loved one, there may be challenges in maintaining the usual activities and routine.
What are the signs and symptoms?

Social

• Feeling sense of isolation when the caregiving duties seem to take control of all aspects of your life.

Physical

• Physical exhaustion with increasing caregiving duties.

• Problem with memory as there are so many caregiving areas to manage.
Five tips in coping with Anticipatory Grief
Tip 1 - Give yourself time & space to grieve

• It is normal to grief and everyone grief differently as we are coming to terms in accepting that we cannot change the outcome.

• Allowing yourself to express different emotions through journaling, join a support group, confide in a good friend etc - giving yourself moments of comfort when you are feeling sad, tired or helpless.
Tip 2 – Take control in certain aspects

• Learning about your loved one’s condition from healthcare professionals i.e. treatment, side effects of the medications so that you know you are on the right track in supporting your loved one.

• Feeling more confident and empowered in preparing ahead for your loved one.
Tip 3 – Create beautiful memories

• Spend quality time with your loved one i.e. read a book together, listen to songs, go for a stroll…

• Reminiscence - Shared memories with your loved one of the good old days i.e. go through photo albums together, songs…laugh and cry together.

• Ignite your creativity in exploring new interests with your loved one.
Tip 4 – Make times for yourself

• Allocate time for self-care – prioritise the tasks.

• Reconnect with your life i.e. watch a nice movie, have afternoon tea with your friends, go for a massage, read your favourite book...

• Seek your friends/family support in running errands or caring for your loved one.
Tip 5 – Speak to a counsellor/therapist

• When you feel that you no longer can calm yourself or when things seem to be getting on your nerves.
This may be a chance to show Appreciation, Gratitude & Forgiveness with our loved one!

You light up my world