

Grandfamilies Tip Sheet Series

For grandparents & other relatives raising children



Kinship Caregiver Wellness

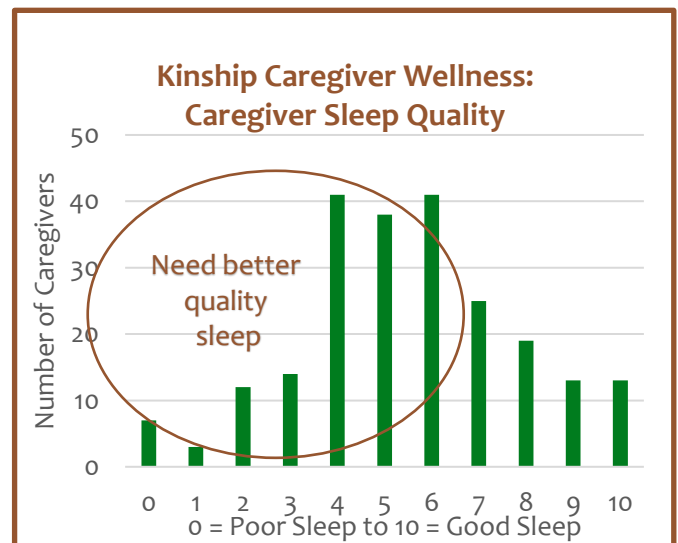
Finding the time and energy to take care of yourself while taking care of others.

Key Findings

Wellness is influenced by our culture, experiences, access to support, and many other aspects of our being. As researchers and practitioners, we have a sense of what components influence wellness for kinship caregivers through our experiences working with families and the existing literature on the topic. However, we need to work in partnership with families so they can drive the definition of what wellness means to them within their family and environment.

According to GrOW's National Grandfamilies and COVID 19 Survey Wave 1 (600 caregivers surveyed in 2020) and Wave 2 (225 caregivers surveyed in 2021), the three issues that had the most impact on caregivers and their families were:

- **managing expanded caregiver responsibilities**
 - **managing anxiety and stress about how things have changed**
 - **healthy sleep for caregivers.**
- **Depression and anxiety** impact kinship caregiver wellness. In terms of general anxiety disorder, 11% (n=22) of kinship caregivers were at risk of generalized anxiety disorder. For 16% (n=35) major depressive disorder is likely, compared to 8% of the US general population.
 - Healthy sleep is impacted by caregiving responsibilities and COVID 19. We found that kinship caregivers need to improve their overall quality sleep.



“ I adjusted expectations for myself and others. One person can only do so much! — Kinship Caregiver ”

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Resources

- Resources for Kinship Caregivers: Impact on Caregivers
- Self-Check Tool for Caregivers
- Caregiver Health
- Caregiving and Ambiguous Loss
- Self-Care for Caregivers
- Caring for Caregivers

Practice Recommendations

Prioritize your own wellness

- Identify sources of stress and your feelings associated with them.
- Consider priorities instead of managing everything all at once
- Break things down in smaller pieces
- Identify what you can and cannot change
- Find sources of relief and replenishment. These may be taking time for yourself, relying on prayer and spiritual beliefs, doing something creative with music, drawing, writing or dancing, meditating, using a calming app, going for a peaceful walk or taking a mental vacation.
- Reframe negative or absolute thinking and see if you can find sources of hope.
- Set small achievable goals and try to devote a few minutes daily to take care of yourself. Getting 10 minutes of exercise, going to bed 15 minutes earlier and swapping out a sugar cereal for whole grains can make a big difference. Small steps can lead to big and positive changes.
- Consider how to actively engage in making changes that feel empowering and that give you a greater sense of control and purpose.
- Remember how you coped effectively in the past to build your confidence that you can get through the current challenges. These are important protective factors.
- Find constructive outlets for negative feelings.

Reach out when needed

- Connect with others in similar situations to decrease isolation.
- Remember it's okay to ask for help. It's fine to turn to close friends and family, clergy, support groups and trusted counselors and professionals.
- Learn about community resources and supports that can reliably provide help

Promote healthy sleep for you and your children

- **Set a consistent bedtime:** Winding down at the same time every night can help to establish your circadian rhythm, your 24-hour internal sleep wake cycle. Although not always possible, going to bed at the same time every night can regulate this cycle and help promote consistent sleep.
- **Establish bedtime routines:** Doing the same thing every evening can prepare your body to slow down and get ready for rest. Bedtime routines for kinship caregivers can include taking a shower, meditating, journaling, prayer, reading, or listening to relaxing music.
- **Create an environment that promotes sleep:** Dark, quiet and cool spaces make for inviting environments to promote healthy sleep. Set the thermostat lower and turn off the lights and electronics to support your sleep setting.



The Grandfamilies Outcome Workgroup (GrOW) is a national collective comprised of multi-disciplinary stakeholders that work across systems of care in partnership with kinship families.

GrOW intentionally integrates the lived experiences of kinship caregivers in its evaluation methods, tools, and resources to support best practice in the field of kinship care. GrOW: Research to Inform Practice.

To learn more about GrOW, visit grandfamilieswork.org

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