

# What Research Participation Makes Possible

Better support for families  
living with dementia

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Research Participant Appreciation Event  
PREVAIL Lab • Emory School of Nursing

**Thank you for helping research  
become practical care.**



# Why this matters

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## Caregiving is loving work — and it can also be hard on the caregiver's own health.

The review highlighted three connected areas that matter most for everyday wellbeing:

1

### Stress & emotions

Many caregivers report high stress, sadness, worry, and emotional exhaustion.

2

### Sleep & recovery

Nighttime caregiving and worry can interrupt sleep and make recovery harder.

3

### Physical health

Long-term stress may also affect blood pressure, inflammation, and overall health.

**Key idea: caregiver support is not only about easing burden — it is also about protecting whole-person health.**

# What we reviewed

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This review asked a practical question:

## What kinds of programs seem to help dementia family caregivers feel — and stay — healthier?

**27**

included studies

**~3,295**

caregivers across  
studies

**2011–2025**

years covered

**RCTs**

stronger study designs

Most programs fell into three groups:

### **Psychoeducation**

Education, coping skills,  
communication, and caregiving  
strategies

### **Exercise**

Walking, aerobic activity, resistance  
training, yoga, or tai chi

### **Combined programs**

A smaller set of studies tried both  
education/support and physical  
activity

# What seems to help most

## The clearest benefits were in how caregivers felt and functioned day to day.

In plain language: these programs were more likely to improve emotional wellbeing and caregiving confidence than to change deeper biological measures.

### What the literature does best

#### It shows that practical, skills-based support can make caregiving feel more manageable.

That matters, because feeling more prepared and less overwhelmed can improve everyday life for both caregivers and families.

#### ✓ Lower burden

Several programs helped caregivers feel less overwhelmed.

#### ✓ Less stress & distress

Stress-related outcomes improved in multiple studies.

#### ✓ Improved mood

Depressive symptoms often improved with support-based programs.

#### ✓ More confidence

Preparedness, competence, and self-efficacy commonly improved.

# What we still need to learn

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## What we know fairly well

- Education and coping support can help with stress, mood, burden, and confidence.
- Programs can be delivered in person, by phone, online, or in mixed formats.
- Multicomponent support often looks promising for everyday wellbeing.

## What remains thin or unclear

- Sleep was measured in only 1 study.
- Biomarkers were measured in only 2 studies.
- Combined education + exercise programs were still relatively rare.
- We still do not know enough about which programs improve both mind and body health over time.

**Bottom line: We know more about how interventions help caregivers feel than about how they affect sleep, inflammation, or healthy aging.**

## One promising example

A culturally tailored study with 142 Black dementia caregivers tested support with and without exercise.



### 3 study groups

attention control • psychoeducation •  
psychoeducation + exercise

1

Both intervention groups reported lower perceived stress.

2

The psychoeducation-only group also improved on some health measures, including blood pressure and blood glucose.

3

In this study, adding exercise did not show clear extra benefit beyond psychoeducation alone.

Take-home: culturally tailored support may be especially meaningful.

# Thank you

Your participation helps research move from questions to real-world support.

- We are learning that caregiver support can improve stress, mood, and confidence.
- We still need better research on sleep, physical health, and long-term outcomes.
- That progress only happens because people are willing to partner with research.

Every study helps us design care that is more practical, more responsive, and more human.

