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## Caregiver Stress & Burnout

When a family member, friend or neighbor is sick, requiring a lot of attention and care, we tend to ask their family and caregivers how the sick person is doing; but do we ever stop to ask "...and how are YOU doing?" (Directed toward the caregiver.)

The demands of caregiving can be overwhelming. Caregiver burnout is a state of emotional, mental, and physical exhaustion caused by the prolonged and overwhelming stress of caregiving. Caregiving is often a long-term challenge, and the stress it generates can be particularly damaging. It can be particularly disheartening when there's no hope that a family member will get better or if, despite the caregiver's best efforts, their condition is gradually deteriorating. If one doesn't get the physical and emotional support needed, the stress of caregiving can leave one vulnerable to a wide range of problems, including depression, anxiety, and eventually burnout which is not good for the caregiver or the person being cared for. Knowing the signs and symptoms of caregiver burnout is the first step:

- Withdrawal from friends and family
- Loss of interest in activities previously enjoyed
- Feeling blue, irritable, hopeless and helpless
- Changes in appetite, weight or both
- Changes in sleep patterns
- Getting sick more often
- Feelings of wanting to hurt oneself or the person for whom one is caring
- Emotional and Physical exhaustion
- Excessive use of alcohol and/or sleep medications
- Irritability



Help is out there when one knows where to look and is not afraid to seek it out. Some tips to manage caregiver stress are:

- Learn ways to better help the loved one. Some hospitals offer classes that can teach how to care for someone with an injury or illness.
- Find caregiving resources in the community to help. Many communities have adult daycare services or respite services to give the primary caregiver a break from their caregiving duties. One can request meal delivery, housekeeping, home modifications, etc.
- Home health care services. Most agencies have staff that can schedule shifts ranging from 4 hours per day to round-the-clock care depending on the patient's and family's needs.
- Ask for help and accept help. Make a list of ways other family members, neighbors and friends can help; someone may sit with the cared person while the caregiver runs an errand or someone could grocery shop for the caregiver.
- Join a support group for caregivers where stories can be shared, caregiving tips can be given and received, etc.
- Keep a daily routine.
- Take time for oneself and for one's health by keeping regular checkups. It is important to let the doctor know of the caregiver status one has.

One can talk to a physician, local area agency on aging, as well as their Church/Synagogue, or other place of worship, for recommendations on assistance.

People need to make sure they take care of themselves so they can take care of the ones they love.

The following website was sourced and referenced for this article:

<https://www.helpguide.org/articles/stress/caregiver-stress-and-burnout.htm>

<https://www.webmd.com/healthy-aging/caregiver-recognizing-burnout#1-2>

<https://www.womenshealth.gov/a-z-topics/caregiver-stress>



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