



PREVENTING CAREGIVER BURNOUT

Tips and Support for Caregivers

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Caring for a family member can be one of the most stressful and exhausting duties that we face in our lifetime. The emotional exhaustion can be overwhelming let alone the physical demands. When the person you are caring for is also terminally ill, the added grief issues can make it all encompassing. Allowing the stress of caregiving to progress to actual burnout can damage your physical and emotional health. If you are caring for a family member that is chronically or terminally ill, you must get the support you need to continue. You are not alone and help is available.

The Warning Signs of Impending Burnout

- You are constantly tired. Your energy level has decreased.
- You are having problems sleeping.
- You have had a change in your diet. You are less hungry, or you are eating everything in sight.
- You are irritable. Everyone and everything gets on your nerves.
- You are beginning to resent the loved one you are caring for.
- You feel hopeless and helpless.
- You are experiencing more physical ailments, such as unexplained aches and pains.
- Excessive use of alcohol, sleeping pills or medications.
- Difficult concentrating, missing doctor's appointments or scheduled activities.
- Thoughts of death.
- Neglectful or rough treatment of the loved one for whom you are caring.
- You are feeling more sadness than usual.

Signs of Depression

Be aware of your own feelings. **Consult a doctor if you have experienced four or more of the following symptoms for a period of two weeks or more:**

- Depressed Mood
- Marked loss of pleasure or interest in your normal activities
- Feeling guilty or worthless
- Restless or agitated
- Anxiety
- Sleeping too little or too much
- Changes in appetite or weight
- Fear
- Neglecting your personal hygiene
- Inability to follow instructions, make decisions or concentrate
- Tearfulness
- Thoughts of death or suicide

The ABC of Burnout

Learning as much as you can about burnout can improve your chances to provide care to your loved one. Following these guidelines can be beneficial.

A=Accept Help

Locate community support systems in your area. Many communities offer emotional support through counseling at little or no charge. Ask other family members to give you a respite. Take a break from the situation. Visit your favorite bookstore, coffee shop or take time to window shop. Even taking an hour or two away not only benefits you...it will indirectly benefit your loved one.

B=Be Realistic

Be realistic and know your limitations. Set clear limits and communicate those limits to family members, friends and even your medical professionals.

C=Community Resources

Utilize the community resources available. You cannot do it alone. Allow others to help.

D=Depression

Watch for signs of depression. As listed above, if you notice that you may be experiencing four or more of those symptoms, notify your healthcare professional.

E=Educate Yourself

Learn as much as you can about your loved one's condition, treatment options and tips on how to prevent caregiver burnout.

The logo for Crossroads is displayed in a light green, cursive font against a solid green background. The word "Crossroads" is written in a flowing, handwritten style, with the 'C' being particularly large and decorative.

Finding Purpose

Find purpose in your life. Find new interests and activities to help balance your life.

Grieve

Allow yourself to grieve. Anticipatory grief is a normal part of caring for a chronically or terminally ill loved one. Realize and allow yourself to find peace and look forward to the future.

Hospice

If you are caring for someone that may be terminally ill, contact a hospice. They can offer assistance, insight and guidance in dealing with life-limiting conditions.

To find a reputable hospice in your area, contact your local hospice and palliative care organization or you can contact Crossroads Hospice by calling 1-888-603-6673 or visiting www.CrossroadsHospice.com.



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