

## Caregiver Burnout Warning Signs

### *7 Signs of Caregiver Burnout & How to Help Yourself*

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Helping to take care of a loved one can be rewarding, while at the same time challenging, demanding and stressful.

It's no wonder that caregivers suffer a high rate of burnout.

According to WebMD, "Caregiver burnout is a state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion that may be accompanied by a change in attitude -- from positive and caring to negative and unconcerned.

### **HOW DO YOU RECOGNIZE CAREGIVER BURNOUT IN YOURSELF**

Experts have determined that there are seven (7) signs of caregiver burnout.

If you are experiencing one or more of these, you may be at risk for burnout.

#### ***STAGE 1 - Loss of Appetite or Other Changes in Your Eating Habits***

- Are you eating less?
- Eating more?
- Losing or gaining weight?
- Eating junk foods?
- Skipping meals?

## **STAGE 2 - *Overly Emotional***

- Do you begin to cry unexpectedly or at inopportune times?
- Do you laugh at things that aren't funny?
- Are you overly sensitive to the comments of others?

## **STAGE 3 - *Feeling Overwhelmed***

- Do you wake up in the morning wondering how you are going to get through the day?
- Do you feel like tasks are accumulating, and you will never be able to catch up?

## **STAGE 4 - *Withdrawn***

- Are you beginning to withdraw into yourself, and away from the world?
- Are you tending to bottle emotions up inside of yourself?
- Are you avoiding confronting people - either your care recipient or others?

## **STAGE 5 - *Isolation from Peers***

- Have you stopped participating in activities that you once enjoyed?
- Are you avoiding the phone calls or other friendly social advances of others?
- Are you making excuses for not seeing people?

## **STAGE 6 - *Losing Focus at Work***

- Are you unable to concentrate on your job?
- Do you find yourself taking excessive time worrying about non- job-related things?
- Do you take excessive time off from work to attend to the needs of your care recipient?
- Has your boss mentioned that you don't seem as focused as you once did?

## **STAGE 7 - *Lack of Interest in Appearance***

- Have you stopped buying clothes for yourself?
- Stopped getting regular haircuts?
- Lost interest in looking your best?

Everyone in a caregiving role is likely to experience some of these things at one time or another.

Ask yourself if the warning signs are debilitating, making your life seem impossible. If so, you may very well be experiencing caregiver burnout, and you may want to seek professional help.

A doctor, therapist or social worker will help you recognize what you can do to make yourself feel better, to take better care of yourself, and to meet the challenges of caregiving once again with an open heart and mind.

## **IS A SUPPORT GROUP RIGHT FOR YOU?**

As a caregiver, you may be feeling alone. You don't have as much time to socialize now that you have to care for a senior or person with special needs. Often times your own family may not understand what you are going through. If this sounds like you, you might want to try to find a support group.

## **WHY A SUPPORT GROUP?**

Support groups are one of the best places for caregivers to find others who are experiencing similar situations. They can help caregivers bond with each other, socialize and build a network of caring, supportive people. Support groups are important because caregivers can express their emotions in a safe place, and can hear from others who have gone or are going through some of the same emotions.

These groups are not meant to be group therapy, but they do allow people to understand that they are not alone, and to learn how others have handled similar emotions, crises and problems. Support groups can also allow people to share valuable information and insights into the dynamics of caregiving and specific illnesses or medical conditions.

## **TYPES OF SUPPORT GROUPS**

A wide variety of support groups are available for caregivers, although these groups are often difficult to sustain. Some groups are designed for people caring for seniors with specific medical, psychological or physical conditions - such as Alzheimer's disease, dementia, diabetes or other illnesses. Others have a more general focus, designed for caregivers of all ages and in all situations.

Think about what kind of support you need, and then start looking for a group that can help with that kind of support. Depending on your interests and time, an Internet support group may be an ideal option so you can share feelings and experiences with others while not taking up too much of your time.

## **WHERE TO FIND A SUPPORT GROUP**

Support groups are formed in many different locations, and you can look around for the one that best suits your needs.

***Here are some of the places that you might look for a support group:***

- **HOSPITAL:** Hospitals often host a variety of support groups, particularly those that focus on a particular medical condition. Check the bulletin boards at your hospital.
- **DOCTOR'S OFFICE:** Ask your doctor if he or she knows of any caregiver support groups in your area.

- **SENIOR CENTER:** Senior centers are a great place to find support groups for caregivers, particularly those focusing on caring for a spouse. Call your local senior center to see what is available.
- **LIBRARY:** Check the local library's newsletter and bulletin boards to see if there are notices of support groups that meet there.
- **NEWSPAPER:** Look under the community section of your local newspaper for information about local support groups, including times, dates and meeting places.
- **CHURCH/SYNAGOGUE:** Churches and synagogues often sponsor or host support groups. Check with your minister, priest or rabbi about these.
- **INTERNET:** Increasingly, the Internet offers a way for caregivers to net- work with each other – locally, nationally and internationally. Look at reputable websites, like AARP, to find information about support groups that meet in real life and in the virtual world.
- **ASSOCIATIONS:** Organizations like the Alzheimer's Association often sponsor support groups; call the local or national number for the organization that interests you to see if there is information about any local support groups.

Source: Parlay International

## INFO-LINE 211

***Remember that help is just a phone call away!***

As I shared in a previous blog article on Info-line, the 211 data base resource number is nationwide, and is operated by a private non-profit community service organization, local government, or local affiliates of the United Way of America.

The amazing thing about dialing 211 is that no matter where you live in the U.S. or Puerto Rico, you will receive access to information and referrals regarding local and national assistance,

## WAYS TO ACCESS 211

1. You can pick up the phone and dial 211

or

2. You can visit - <http://www.211.org>

You will be taken to a website where you can search for by zip code, city, or state

This can be especially helpful if you are searching for resources for a friend or family member who lives in another area of the country.

Photo from Microsoft

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*Please consult your health care provider for an appointment, before making any healthcare decisions or for guidance about a specific medical condition.*

*Linda Ziac is the owner and founder of The Caregiver Resource Center. The Caregiver Resource Center is a division of Employee Assistance Professionals, Inc. which Linda founded in October 1990. The Caregiver Resource Center provides a spectrum of concierge case management and advocacy services for seniors, people with special needs and families.*

*Linda's professional career spans more than 40 years in the health and mental health field as a CT Licensed Professional Counselor, CT Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselor, Board Certified Employee Assistance Professional, Board Certified Case Manager, and Board Certified Dementia Practitioner. In addition, Ms. Ziac has 15 years of experience coordinating care for her own parents.*

*Linda assists seniors, people with special needs and their families; in planning for and implementing ways to allow for the greatest degree of health, safety, independence, and quality of life. Linda meets with individuals and family members to assess their needs, and develop a Care Team, while working with members of the Team to formulate a comprehensive Care Plan (a road map).*

*Once a plan is in place, Linda is available to serve as the point person to monitor and coordinate services, and revise the plan as needed. This role is similar to the conductor of an orchestra; ensuring that there is good communication, teamwork, and that everyone remains focused on the desired goal.*

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