

DISCOVERING *Your Best Self*

YOUR WEEKLY COMMUNICATION

Caregiving: Recognizing Burnout

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Providing round-the-clock home care to an elderly family member or ailing loved one can take its toll. Rearranging family schedules, ensuring that medical appointments are attended, and simply taking care of the daily responsibilities of cleaning, feeding, and medicating can lead to caregiver burnout. Knowing how to recognize the warning signs of burnout will help you find the assistance and support you need to seek help early and continue providing quality care.

Below is a list of common symptoms a person may experience prior to, or during, burnout:

1. **Complications with Your Diet**

Have you lost your appetite? Are you skipping meals? Are you experiencing noticeable weight loss or weight gain? Are you eating more junk food/comfort foods and ignoring your nutrition?

2. **Feeling out of Balance Emotionally**

Are you being overly sensitive to what people say? Do you respond to complaints by lashing out verbally or physically? Do you catch yourself crying at odd times or for no reason?

3. **Feeling as if You Can't Keep Up with Everything**

Do you feel overwhelmed by your responsibilities? Do you wonder how you're going to get everything accomplished? Do you feel like your daily tasks are mounting up?

4. **Retreating from Your Life**

Are you withdrawing from your family and friends? Do you hide concerns or problems from others? Do you avoid conflict with your care patient or your family?

5. **Cutting off Contact with Friends**

Have you stopped spending time with your friends? Are you avoiding the activities that used to make you happy? Do you put off contacting those that care about you? Have you made excuses for why you don't spend time with others?

6. **Inability to Focus at Work**

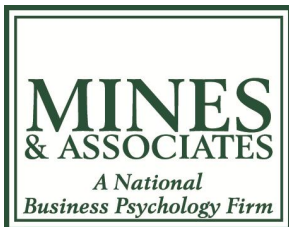
Are you falling behind at work? Are you having trouble focusing on your day-to-day projects? Do you take long breaks or vacation time to care for your patient? Has your manager or supervisor expressed concern over your work habits?

7. Letting Yourself Go

Have you stopped caring about your appearance? Do you wear the same clothes for days on end? Have you started bathing only a few times a week?

If you experience one or more of these warning signs, it's time to reach out to someone for assistance. As time passes, you'll only discover that you're exposing yourself to additional sources of stress. Getting help early helps you to relieve some of this tension and enables you to continue your caregiving responsibilities.

Taking care of your own needs is one of the most important aspects of caregiving. You can't sufficiently care for others unless you're healthy and happy yourself. Consider seeing a mental health professional who can help provide a place to share your concerns and recharge your caregiving energies. Keep up with your friends and reach out to those that can help you keep your life balanced and in focus while you care for another.



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