

Avoiding Burnout

Empowering strategies for caregivers

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A little about burnout

- Roughly 78% of caregivers for people with Alzheimer's dementia are family members, but the responsibility of caregiving can take a toll on caregivers.
- It is concerning to note that extreme stress levels are experienced by 58% of caregivers, sleep deprivation is reported by 47% of caregivers, and isolation occurs in 43% of caregivers (Vu et al., 2022).

- **What about you? How is your well-being now that you are caring for your loved one?**
- **The reality is that you can't do everything alone!**

RECOGNIZING AND ADDRESSING CAREGIVER BURNOUT

- Recognizing and addressing caregiver burnout is crucial because it directly impacts both you and the loved one you care for. Caring for someone with dementia can be emotionally and physically demanding, which may lead to stress, exhaustion, and intense feelings of overwhelm. When caregivers experience burnout, their ability to provide quality care diminishes, negatively affecting the well-being of their loved ones.

- When you prioritize your well-being—not just your loved one's—you can better manage stress, maintain your own well-being, and provide higher-quality care to your loved one.

Signs of Burnout

It is important to pay attention to potential signs and symptoms of burnout in yourself.

Are you experiencing burnout?

Physical Exhaustion

Caregiving often involves physically demanding tasks such as lifting, assisting with mobility, and providing personal care. Overtime, the physical demands of caregiving can lead to exhaustion,

Even if you are getting enough sleep.

Emotional Exhaustion

The challenges of dementia, such as cognitive decline, personality

changes, and communication difficulties, can be emotionally



Withdrawal

You may be burning out if you withdraw from social activities,

Loose interest in activities that were previously enjoyable or important to you.

Increased Stress and Anxiety

feel overwhelmed by the responsibility of caregiving. You may also struggle to concentrate on tasks, become forgetful, and experience decreased productivity

Difficulty Sleeping

You may struggle to fall or stay asleep due to stress, worry, or overwhelm

Physical Symptoms

Chronic stress and exhaustion can manifest as physical symptoms such as headaches, stomach issues, or frequent illness. You may experience a weakened immune system, making you more susceptible to infections and other health problems.

Neglecting Personal Care

Being constantly busy with your loved one can make it difficult to look after yourself. You may prioritize their needs over your own, thus neglecting your health and wellness. Skipping meals, neglecting exercise

*Lean on your support network—more on that later in the chapter
—of family and friends. Share your feelings, concerns, and experi-
ences with trusted individuals who can offer empathy, validation,
and practical assistance.*

Caregiver tools

Caregiver Strain Index

The Caregiver Strain Index (CSI) is a brief self-report questionnaire that assesses the level of strain experienced by caregivers. It consists of 13 yes or no questions covering various aspects, such as physical, emotional, and financial strain. A higher total score is indicative of increased strain.

Zarit Burden Interview

The Zarit Burden Interview (ZBI) is a widely used tool designed to assess caregiver burden. It consists of a series of questions that inquire about your feelings of burden, stress, and emotional strain related to caregiving responsibilities. You rate each item on a scale; higher scores indicate a greater burden.

Supporting Yourself as a Caregiver

- **Connect with Others**
 - Connect with other caregivers for understanding and emotional support
 - Consider professional support from therapists, counselors, or social workers
- **Set Realistic Expectations**
 - Dementia caregiving can be unpredictable
 - Accept that not everything will go according to plan
 - Prioritize essential tasks such as meals and personal hygiene
 - Break large tasks into smaller, manageable steps
- **Take Regular Breaks**
 - Schedule time to rest and recharge
 - Use breaks for relaxation or enjoyable activities
 - Consider **respite care** for longer periods of relief

- **Practice Self-Care**
 - Make time for hobbies, friends, reading, or relaxation
 - Prioritize exercise, healthy eating, and adequate sleep
 - Taking care of yourself helps maintain energy and manage stress
 - Example: Louisa improved her well-being by asking family for help so she could return to the gym
- **Set Boundaries**
 - Recognize your limits
 - Learn to say “**I can’t right now**”
 - Communicate your needs and boundaries with family and care professionals
- **Delegate Responsibilities**
 - Ask family, friends, or professional caregivers for help
 - Divide caregiving responsibilities among family members
 - Create schedules so everyone can contribute
- **Use Stress-Relief Techniques**
 - Practice slow, deep breathing
 - Try progressive muscle relaxation
 - Relaxation techniques can reduce stress and help prepare for sleep

- *Make time for social activities and interactions that bring you joy and fulfillment and give you a moment to forget about everything happening at home.*

*****Participate in community activities, clubs, or organizations that align with your interests and values. Engaging in social activities outside of caregiving can provide a much-needed break and improve your mood*

Support groups

Relationships can become strained when you are a caregiver. Additionally, you are creating new connections with other caregivers and people in your support network. Here are some tips to help you establish and strengthen these connections.



-Attend Events

a space to make lasting friendships.

-Attending workshops, seminars, or other educational events focused on caregiving and self-care. More specifically, look for caregiver-focused events, such as caregiver appreciation events or retreats.

-Participate in Forums

Join online forums, discussion boards, or social media groups dedicated to dementia caregiving.

Managing Medical Bills & Insurance

- **Keep Detailed Records**
 - Organize medical bills, insurance statements, receipts, and payment confirmations
 - Review bills for incorrect services, dates, or charges
 - Keep documentation for future questions or disputes
- **Understand Insurance Coverage**
 - Know deductibles, copays, coinsurance, and coverage limits
 - Check out-of-network restrictions and prior authorization requirements
 - Contact the insurance company with questions about coverage or financial assistance
- **Handle Denied Claims**
 - Review the denial letter to understand why the claim was rejected
 - Appeal incorrect or disputed denials
 - Include supporting medical records and documentation
- **Negotiate Medical Bills**
 - Contact the provider's billing department if you cannot pay in full
 - Ask about payment plans or financial assistance programs
 - Ask whether discounts are available for financial hardship

“You cannot pour from an empty cup. Caring for yourself is not selfish—it gives you the strength to keep caring for the person who needs you.”



References

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1IG0MpYLz6xsZ_ZUImKiwu33y_-ZF8zzjcrCqQ8Ohmfl/edit?usp=sharing