

eNews

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SelfCare

Preventative and
Self-care Strategies
for addressing
Compassion Fatigue

GUIDE TO BEING A SUCCESSFUL CAREGIVER



I am only one, BUT I am one.

*I cannot do everything,
BUT
I can do something.
And, I will not let what
I cannot do interfere with
what I can do.*

EDWARD EVERETT HALE

Compassion Fatigue: A Syndrome That Affects Us All

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Compassion fatigue affects those professionals who, on a regular basis, deal with clients with serious injuries and anyone who is in a “helping” profession. It also affects those who give care in the home to those who cannot care for themselves.

Strategy No. 1

Set Personal Limits

Compassion fatigue occurs when an individual oversteps his or her personal limits in order to help another. There is a strong motivation and drive to help and to neglect one’s own boundaries and symptoms of exhaustion. There is a causal link between feeling needed and increased feelings of high self-esteem.

Strategy No. 2

Put “You” First

Emphasize absolute self-care. You have to learn to put yourself first! The best way to take control of your situation is to learn how to say “no”; a very simple; albeit powerful concept. The ability to say no to an extra task, to putting yourself at risk for exhaustion, means you can erect a barrier or a protective shield around yourself to establish your own personal limits. Ultimately, you will

decide when to be vulnerable. A key component of absolute self-care is nurturing yourself. By nurturing yourself, you leave yourself with the strength and capacity to nurture others.

Remember, nurturing yourself does not equate to being self-ish. It is simply a preventative measure to avoid a ‘deficit’ in your care-giving profession that could produce rage, sarcasm, abuse of others and feeling the need to constantly prove something to yourself. Remember to have your own

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strategies

definition of honourableness so that you are not reliant on the affirmations of others. You can give yourself a dose of 'anti-depressant' by saying "good for me" and meaning it!

Strategy No. 3

Give Positive Feedback

Part of being a successful care-giver entails having a positive rapport with your staff and colleagues. Feedback is important — to praise others and show appreciation creates a more comfortable work environment. There is no toxic dose of support: as humans, we thrive on praise and appreciation.

Strategy No. 4

Plan B

In this ever fluctuating and sometimes tumultuous economy, we are often worried

about job security. This worry can prevent you from saying what you mean in the workplace and trying to rectify certain difficult situations. The presenters suggested the idea of having a 'contingency plan'. If you have a Plan B, you will not be afraid to approach your concerns and advocate for change.

Strategy No. 5

Learn How to Pace Yourself

A detrimental component of being in a "helping" profession is burn-out. To prevent burn-out, you must learn how to pace yourself. Create your very own 'healthy stress cycle' where stress is interspersed with rest, relaxation, recovery and downtime. Find a formula that works for you. Aim to find your work life balance. In order to find balance, you need to give

*“Nobody can do everything,
BUT, everyone can do something.* ANONYMOUS

strategies

yourself permission for leisure time. A leisure activity does not have to be sedentary, as long as it is by choice, it is considered to be leisurely.

Strategy No. 6

Get Some Sleep

Get some sleep to prevent burn-out. There are grave consequences of sleep deprivation including decreased concentration, depression, irritability, decreased memory, and a decreased immune response. For those with difficulty sleeping, be open to meditation or auto-hypnosis. You can also try to add half an hour of sleep every few nights until you reach a well-rested state. Limit sleeping in to a

maximum of one and a half hours of extra sleep. Do not be afraid to invest in power naps!

Strategy No. 7

Be True to Yourself

It is important to be true to yourself. What are your gifts? What can you give to the world effortlessly? Does the nature of your professional duties conflict with your own personal nature? You want to avoid having a discrepancy between your personality and work so that you don't end up fatigued. Above all, don't self-deprecate, self-appreciate! **G&A**

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