

More Community Groups and Agencies

Cancer Assistance Program: 905-383-9797

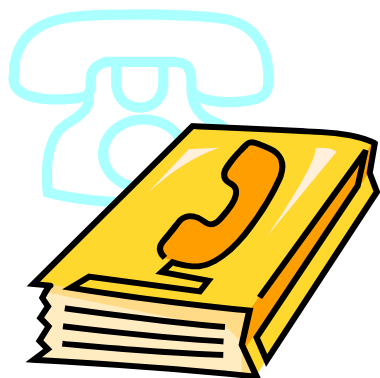
Community Care Access Centre (CCAC) in Hamilton-Wentworth: 905-523-8600

Community Care Access Centre (CCAC) in other areas: Check your telephone book.

Community Information Service for Hamilton-Wentworth: 905-528-0104

Home Maintenance Program: 905-522-6887 ext 2240

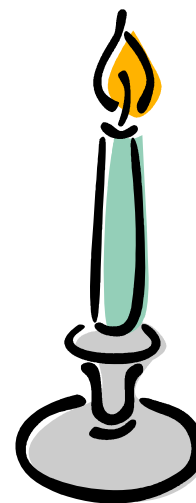
Meals-on-wheels: 905-522-1022



St. Joseph's
Healthcare  Hamilton

Avoiding Caregiver Burnout

**Looking after yourself
when you are looking after
someone else . . .**



About this book:

Looking after a loved one is a loving decision. It means that you are giving yourself emotionally and physically to this person. Most people cannot do this alone. Caregiver burnout occurs when a caregiver tries to do more than he or she can. When this happens, feelings of guilt and anger begin to take over feelings of love.



What causes burnout?

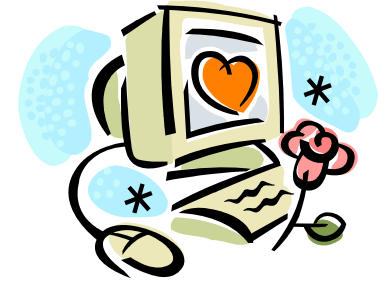
Here are some causes of burnout that other caregivers have shared:

- Being on the alert for sounds or calls for help from your loved one.
- Thinking of all of the things you have to do. This happens most when you are trying to get some sleep.
- Feeling tired and aching after a long day.
- Poor eating habits.
- Lack of exercise and relaxation for yourself.
- Trying to manage one minute at a time.
- Feeling stress, anxiety and fear most of the time.

Community Groups and Agencies

There are many ways to find help.

If you can use a computer you can begin by searching the internet and think about the kind of help you may want. You can also go to a local library and a librarian would be happy to help you search.



Here are some good sites to start with:

Support Services in Hamilton-Wentworth:

- myhamilton.ca
- inform.hamilton.ca

These sites offer many services and ideas for getting support with home care, personal support, finances, health information, respite programs, and adult day care programs.

Alzheimer Society of Hamilton and Halton:

Caregiver Support Services: 905-529-7030

Canadian Cancer Society:

905-575-9220

Who can help?

Start a support network list. Think about who can be on your list:

- Some people want to help but avoid being pushy to respect your privacy.
- Some people just want a reminder to take the time to help.
- Some people may not know that your life has changed and that you are caregiving now.
- Some people cannot read your mind. When they ask, “How are you?” Do not say, “I am fine”. Tell the truth.



More causes of burnout that other caregivers have shared:

- You have a general idea of your loved one’s problems and future. You have not really talked to a health care provider to have all of your questions answered.
- Finances concern you. You are not sure of the costs of other methods of care or help such as assisted living centers and nursing homes.
- You only have so much time to divide between you, your family and caregiving. There never seems to be enough time.
- You are the one doing everything although you have family members that could help.
- No matter what you do, it is never good enough for your loved one.



How do I know if I am burning out?

Here are some signs. Check the ones that match how you are feeling:



- I lack energy or feel tired when I wake up.
- I find small tasks seem very big.
- I have trouble concentrating.
- I have gained weight.
- I have lost weight.
- I do not feel like going out or seeing my friends.
- I feel empty.
- Relationships in my home are tense.
- I feel disorganized.
- I do not laugh much.
- My moods swing.
- I cry or feel like crying a lot.
- I have colds, flu and feel unwell.
- I drink more alcohol than normal.
- I drink more caffeine than normal.
- I take medications to keep me going.
- I do not exercise.

When others help

When your friends, family and others help, accept that they may do things differently.

Be positive and reward them. It is all right if they do not do it the same as you would. They are helping and you have the break you need.



Be real

Accept that you are doing the best you can. If someone says something negative, explain your reasons then ask for their help. Accept that some people will never be happy. Avoid being picked on.

Express your feelings

You have a right to feel angry, frustrated, hopeless and helpless. Most caregivers also feel guilty for having these feelings.

It is healthy to talk about your feelings. Talk to a person you trust such as a friend, faith leader, social worker, psychologist or nurse. When you talk to others you will soon learn that you are not alone. Together you can find solutions that work for you and your loved one.

Some ways these people can help . . .

- A social worker can help you with finances and finding community supports to help.
- A counsellor can help you talk about your feelings and manage day to day life.
- A dietitian can offer healthy eating ideas.
- A pharmacist can problem solve if medications are causing any symptoms for your loved one.
For example, if your loved one is awake at night, you may just need to give a medication at a different time of day.

Call a family meeting

Call a family meeting.
Talk about your concerns.
Share the information you have from the doctor and other health care providers. Be clear about your needs.
Make a plan together to balance the workload.



If you feel that a family meeting may be strained, ask a social worker or minister to lead the meeting.

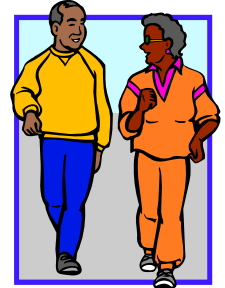
What can I do to help myself?

Write a to-do list for the day or week so you do not have to remember it all. Keep the list in the same place – on the refrigerator or by the telephone.



Make a plan to look after yourself first. Most people need to learn to ask for help from friends, family and health care providers.

For example, for your own health, plan to take a 20 to 30 minute walk every day. Arrange for a friend or family member to sit with your loved one during this time. Set small goals. If you want to walk every day, set a goal to do this 3 times a week at first. Then you will be more likely to reach that goal.



Follow a healthy diet for you and your loved one.

- Avoid caffeine, alcohol and fatty foods. These can keep you and your loved one awake at night.
- Avoid offering fluids in the evening to reduce the number of times you have to wake up to help your loved one to the bathroom.

More ways to help yourself . . .

Attend a support group to talk to other caregivers:

Talking to others helps in many ways. Support groups let you know that you are not alone. Many great ideas come out of these meetings. The social time is also very good for you.



You can contact some of the resources at the back of this handout to start.

Learn to relax:

- You may need to try a few ways to find the method that helps you relax the most.
- Try journal writing, meditation, talking to a friend, praying, doing some form of art, listening to music or learn deep breathing and relaxation exercises. Relaxation exercises help during the day and at bedtime.
- There are audio programs you can listen to. These help you learn how to breathe and relax.



Be honest

Ask for help. Most often, family and friends want to help but do not know how. Tell them what you need. You can teach others how to help as well. For example, start by having a friend come over while you take a walk. At first, tell your friend what to do when you are gone. Start by walking around the block several times so your friend can catch you if needed. As your friend gets used to caregiving, you can walk further from home.

Ask for help picking children from school, shopping, dropping off a healthy meal, cooking, cleaning or doing laundry.



Learn about your loved one

Make an appointment to talk to the doctor about your loved one. Write your questions down. Take a friend with you to record the doctor's answers so you can review them later. This will help you plan for the future. If your doctor's office offers services to speak to a social worker or counsellor, make an appointment to talk to them.

