Recognizing caregiver burnout

Research shows that caregivers report higher levels of stress than their non-caregiving colleagues. Caregiver burnout is a state of physical, emotional and mental exhaustion that can happen when you don't get the help you need, or if you try to do more than you're able.

Causes of caregiver burnout include:

Role confusion – Having difficulty separating the role from the one of spouse, child or friend.

Unrealistic expectations – You may expect your care to have a positive effect on the health and happiness of the person you care for.

Lack of control – Feelings of frustration over a lack of money, resources and skills to manage your loved one's care well.

Unreasonable demands – Taking on too much because you see providing care as your job alone over seeking help from others.

Other factors – Jeopardizing your own well-being by not recognizing when you are burned out.

Symptoms of caregiver burnout include:

- Withdrawal from family and friends
- Loss of interest in activities you used to enjoy
- Feeling hopeless and helpless
- Changes in appetite, weight or both
- Changes in sleep patterns
- Getting sick more often
- Emotional and physical exhaustion
- Using alcohol or sleep medications too much
- Feelings of wanting to hurt yourself or the person you are caring for

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