Helping Family Caregivers Through the Compassion

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Compassion Fatigues

"Caring for an elderly parent will kill you faster than anything."

~ Bud, November 6, 2014

Compassion Fatigues

Family caregiver stress
is overlooked epidemic in our communities.

Caregiving Stress

We asked family caregivers: What's your stress and its source?

- 1340 responses: December 2015 through April 18, 2025.

Caregiving Stress

On a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being the least stressed and 5 being the most stressed, how stressed are you?

1: 3 respondents **2**: 35 respondents **3**: 256 respondents

4: 589 respondents **5**: 457 respondents

Caregiving Stress

How stressed are family caregivers?

4.09 on a scale of 1 to 5

Caregiving Stress

What's the cause of your stress?

No. 1 answer:

I miss my life: 69%

Caregiving Stress

What's the cause of your stress?

No. 2 and No. 3 answer:

I don't sleep well at night: 63%

I haven't had a break: 58%

Caregiving Stress

What's the cause of your stress?

I don't have enough help: 53%

I don't have enough time: 52%

My own health is suffering: 51%

Caregiving Stress

The surprise:

What's the cause of your stress?

I'm not confident in what I'm doing: 23%

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How do we endure the pain and suffering?

Compassion Fatigues

The caregiving stress = The caregiving fatigues

Bad luck fatigue	Cooperation fatigue
Coping fatigue	Discouragement fatigue
Grace fatigue	Grief fatigue
Guilt fatigue	Support fatigue

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Our words can help soothe the burn from the fatigues.

Once a family caregiver feels understood, he or she is more apt to receive suggestions and referrals.

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Bad Luck Fatigue

- Has a string of bad luck
- Has to keep going, including through the bad luck
- "It's awful that you just can't get a break especially because you do so much for so many."

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Cooperation fatigue

- Uses lots of services so must adjust the schedule to accommodate the agencies providing services
- Has to change plans on a dime
- "Given how much of your time is not about you but about someone else, no wonder you're tired of being so cooperative."

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Coping fatigue

- More than one caree
- The weight of the responsibility falls on one
- "Given how much you do, no wonder you are just tired from coping with all that happens."

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Discouragement fatigue

- Continues to try to find solutions but regularly runs into brick walls
- Struggles with believing something will work
- "You are trying so hard to find what can work and so far nothing is! No wonder you're running low on hope."

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Grace fatigue

- Smiles through the pain
- Endures disappointment
- "Given how kind you are when others drop the ball, no wonder you are tired of being gracious."

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Grief fatigue

- Experiences significant losses to a lifestyle, relationships, the definition of life and the future
- "Given how much you've lost, no wonder you're grieving. And, the grieving itself is exhausting. It makes so much sense how tired you are."

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Guilt fatigue

- Have normal feelings and reactions to the caregiving experience
- Their sense of empathy for others, though, leads to judgements about those feelings

"Caregiving is so hard that it's no wonder you want it to end. You wish for the end of the suffering for you and your caree. I can totally understand that wish."

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Support fatigue

- Cares for everyone (aging parents, kids, friends)
- Ready with an empathetic ear and caring heart
- "You do so much for so many. I can understand why you just get so tired of giving support without receiving it in return."

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"Even if you are not caregiving at the moment, it's all you can think about. Makes you mentally numb because you can't seem to succeed at anything because you are divided in too many directions. So you are broke from lack of work hours, mentally drained because you are torn in so many directions and your health goes down because you feel like taking care of yourself is selfish and too expensive."

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"Struggling with the catch 22 of the only way that I get things back to normal, which is what I think I want the most, is for my dad to pass, which I don't want. I feel tremendous guilt whenever I look forward to getting back to normal."

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"Caregiver since 1991, no question of being burned out, just struggling to pull myself out of it! Knowing you both love each other, however, we have lost that intimate connection. Missing my spouse even though he (is) still with me. Having your spouse around but you're doing everything including raising your kids on your own. Crying at a drop of a hat!"

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"Financial concerns down the road as things progress & I need help to keep DH home (or if I get sick & need home care). Part of my stress is from a lot of losses in the past 2 years--our jobs, MIL passing away, DH diagnoses, needing to downscale & move, loss of friends & activities cause of our move. And maybe this: the fact that I was a professional care giver & medication person but I worked a 8-10 hour shift and then could walk out the door. I loved eldercare and took pride in doing my very best for my clients. It's VERY different taking care of DH, which is 24/7, day after day at home. Very different dynamics & how we interact verses caring for clients at work."

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"I care for both parents, but my mother passed away on Thanksgiving. Dad has become lonely, clingy, and anxious. He and my mother were together for 62 years."

"The loss of the man I married and still love only to be replaced with one I don't like."

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"Just moved to a new house, new plans, new life. We just got married 3 weeks before the massive stroke."

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"I'm very lonely and I feel like I can't breathe. My caree is legally blind and elderly and incontinent and always has blood in his urine. I'm always cleaning up food, poop and bloody tissues from the floor. I never know what will be awaiting me when I step on the front porch or when I enter the bathroom or anywhere in the house. My long awaited, 5-6 year vacation has been taken from me because my caree was in the hospital so I used up too much of my paid time off. I cried. I need a break. No one is here with us. My brother who used to help died just four months ago from cancer. I love my caree but this is too much for me. I'm almost suicidal."

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"I'm completely responsible for my 93 and 92 year old parents. Most of the money is gone paying $16 an hour for some caregiving help. They both have dementias and he makes loud noise all of the time and can't do anything for himself. My mother can't remember much. Both incontinent. Been at it for 5+ years and don't know how long this will last or what to do next."

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"My husband's 3-year battle with cancer has been running our lives. Taking care of him and working full time has left me with little time for anything else. One result is that I have become very isolated as friends have dropped away and I have nothing to add to the casual conversations that others have at work. None of my husband's family has ever come out from the East Coast to California to visit him -- not even the couple of times that he was on the brink of death. My sister has not been supportive of me since the first year Jim was diagnosed. The lack of support from family is one of the most hurtful things I deal with."

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"I am an only child with two sons. My husband died in June from colon cancer. My mom is 92 & has been with me since my father died eight years ago."

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"Trying to keep up with paperwork, doctors, house keeping, a parent who has never completely grown up, family members out having fun while I deal with the bad stuff, no social life, not enough money. Can't even remember what day it is sometimes and getting criticism because I cannot stay on top of everything. My doctor wants to know why I keep having to cancel my appointments."

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"Guilt - so much guilt. Not spending enough time with caree and then losing patience with her when I do."

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"Sometimes I wonder how we survive. We just keep on going like the little bunny energizer and I know God watches over us. I am so sleep deprived sometimes I run into things. Somehow we will all get through this. God bless and watch over you."

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We must keep family caregivers well.

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- 6,120 hospitals (Fast Fasts on U. S. Hospitals 2024)
- 1.1 million physicians (Statista.com)
- 4.7 million registered nurses (RNs) nationwide (Journal of Nursing Regulation)
- 3.7 million home health and personal care aides (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics)
- At least 53 million (one in 5 Americans) family caregivers and growing (National Alliance for Caregiving and AARP. Caregiving in the U.S. 2020: A Focused Look at Family Caregivers of Adults Age 50+)

Thank You!

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