



Caregiver Fatigue

by Josie Padro



We can all relate to the feeling we get when we've been carrying a heavy package for a long time. Our muscles give us warnings that we can't continue to support the load until eventually we're forced to put it down. After taking a rest, we can pick up the load and carry on.

Caregiving is similar. Even though it's done willingly and with love, caring for someone on a daily basis is taxing. In addition to the physical work that may include bathing, dressing and transferring; caregivers can suffer from inadequate sleep if they are up during the night assisting their loved one. According to the Family Caregiver's Alliance, 22 percent of caregivers report they feel exhausted by the end of the day.

There's also an emotional load to carry. Caregivers often feel torn between guilt – feeling they are not doing enough or a good enough job, and frustration – feeling they cannot devote enough time to their career, friends or to caring for their own health.

The impact of caring for someone else doesn't go unnoticed by the body and the

mind. If caregivers don't take time to look after themselves they can eventually suffer compassion fatigue, also known as burnout. Symptoms include sleep disturbance, constantly feeling

physically tired, changes in body weight, apathy, and chronic physical problems.

Caregivers who are stressed have a higher rate of coronary heart disease and stroke. Older caregivers are at higher risk of falls and injury and often experience worsening of their own chronic illnesses. Depression is also a very common experience among caregivers.

Looking after yourself is not only important for your own well being, but it will ensure your ability to care for your friend or family member.

If you don't know where to start, you might want to attend one of our caregiver sessions.