

HOW TO SPOT CAREGIVER BURNOUT

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The risk of burnout by family caregivers is well known, and it's important to be able to recognize the signs, so that timely help can be given. Here is a list of warning signs:

1. The caregiver appears withdrawn from friends and social activities that were once pleasurable.
2. The caregiver displays anger towards the patient, or others, because there seems to be no effective treatment or cure, and not enough is understood about the disease.
3. The caregiver is in denial about the severity and ultimate outcome of the disease.
4. In spite of this, the caregiver seems anxious about facing another day and what the future holds.
5. Depression sets in, affecting the caregiver's ability to cope.
6. Exhaustion makes it hard for the caregiver to finish the day's tasks.
7. Lack of concentration makes even simple tasks seem insurmountable.
8. Irritability leads to moodiness and triggers negative responses.
9. The caregiver sleeps badly because of a never-ending list of concerns.
10. Health problems crop up, and begin to take a mental and physical toll.

While the above checklist was prepared with Alzheimer's disease caregivers in mind, the points are equally valid for diagnosing burnout in family caregivers of stroke, cancer, or other chronic disease victims. Family members and friends should make arrangements at once for caregiver respite - whether by enrolment in a semi-organized respite program, or by an informal duty-rota relief scheme.

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