

Caregiver Burnout

About caregiver burnout

What is caregiver burnout?

Caregiver burnout is the collective exhaustion that occurs in a person when they are caring for others, particularly those with high needs. This exhaustion can be physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual. It can run deep and stretch wide, and it can make us feel disconnected from our loved ones and even our authentic selves. We can experience burnout taking care of children, adults, dependents, or partners.

How do I know that I am experiencing caregiver burnout?

Caregiver burnout can manifest in a lot of different ways including fatigue, anxiety, stress, depression, changes in appetite and sleep, weakened immune system, and more. It can be hard to recognize when it is happening to us because it usually builds up gradually from day to day, week to week, and month to month. If you are experiencing any of these symptoms while you are taking care of others, you may be experiencing caregiver burnout.

What do I do if I'm experiencing caregiver burnout?

You are not alone and you are not a deficient caregiver.

The first step is to recognize that most caregivers experience burnout. It is a normal and common experience. This burnout can occur precisely because we care so deeply about others, and by wanting to see them thrive and live independently, we try to do too much. When either yourself or the people you are caring for are experiencing mental or physical health struggles such as grief, the risk of caregiver burnout can increase substantially.

Find resources & respite.

Sometimes we experience caregiver burnout because our loved ones have needs exceeding our resources. This can require changes within the family system such as asking a partner or family member for extra help or to shoulder more responsibilities. Under these circumstances, we often require resources from outside the family as well. Colorado has some wonderfully comprehensive resources for caregivers such as respite care, care aids, waivers, childcare and more. Reference the helpful resources listed on the second page of this document to learn more. Remember, it is *okay and often necessary* to ask for help.

Engage in meaningful self-care.

We cannot pour from an empty cup. When you attempt to care for others while neglecting to take care of yourself, caregiver burnout is more likely. If you are not in a

good place personally, it is exceedingly difficult to show up for others and provide what they need. It is crucial that you are taking care of yourself, whatever that might mean for you, whether it is through sleep, diet, exercise, hobbies, or watching something you like on TV or reading a book.

Develop coping skills.

When we find ourselves overwhelmed by burnout, it is important that we utilize our coping skills. On the back of this page will also be some links to explore healthy coping skills. A coping skill is any activity or practice we engage in to help us feel better that helps us work through difficulties. It can sometimes feel selfish to do things for ourselves when we have others to take care of, but sometimes the best thing we can do to serve others is to serve ourselves and recharge our batteries. If you don't take care of yourself, your care for others is likely to suffer.

Connect with others.

Remember, you are not alone in this struggle. Your child may be grieving, and therefore you choose to join a grief group like those offered at Judi's House. Here you can connect with other adults that understand. However, your loved one may be struggling with other things such as disabilities or additional mental/physical health difficulties. It can be helpful to search your community to see if there are any support groups or resources available to help cope and connect with others who are going through similar situations.

Additional information & resources

For more information on caregiver burnout:

- <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/9225-caregiver-burnout>

For information on respite care:

- <https://www.coloradospitecoalition.org/resource-finder/providers/guided-search.php>

To explore childcare referrals and resources:

- <https://www.coloradoshines.com/search>
- <https://unitedwaydenver.org/child-care-request/>
- <https://www.care.com/>

To explore healthy coping skills:

- <https://positivepsychology.com/coping-skills-worksheets/>

To apply for benefits such as food, cash, medical and childcare assistance through Colorado PEAK:

- <https://coloradopeak.secure.force.com/>

You can also contact a non-profit called Benefits in Action for assistance in applying for benefits if you find PEAK difficult to use or understand. To book a navigator through their website visit the following link:

- <https://www.benefitsinaction.org/book-a-navigator>

For help with food assistance:

- Call Hunger Free Colorado at 720-328-1284.

Contact your county to learn more about the resources they provide:

- <https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdle/more-assistance>

To find an individual therapist or psychiatrist:

- <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us>