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# Care For The Caregiver - Causes And Strategies To Prevent Burnout

Nursing is one of the most highly rewarding and highly respected professions. The increasing number of patients coupled with the increasing complexity has posed workplace challenges, placing nurses at risk for negative consequences (Neville & Cole, 2013). The negative consequences are not only affecting nurses at work, but can also affect home life and health.

Nurses often care for others while putting their own needs aside. Nurses tend to have poor health-promoting behaviors, putting them at risk of developing compassion fatigue (Neville & Cole, 2013). "Compassion fatigue is the final result of a progressive and cumulative process, which is caused by prolonged, continuous, and intense contact with patients, the use of self and exposure to stress, which manifests with marked physical, social, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual changes that increase in intensity" (Neville & Cole, 2013). In a study completed by Mullen, he found that only 34% of nurses recognized compassion fatigue (Neville & Cole, 2013). Based on that number, Mullen has deduced that nurses need to engage in self-help initiatives to either avoid or manage the compassion fatigue. Fellow nurses and colleagues also need to be aware of the signs and symptoms of compassion fatigue and help make friends aware. Florence Nightingale said that nurses should not undercut their own health (Neville & Cole, 2013). The implementation of health promotion behaviors are related to a decrease in compassion fatigue. Nurses who continue to give of themselves without taking time to recharge are less able to care for others (Stark, Manning-Walsh, & Vliem, 2005).

Nurses need to learn to recognize when stress levels are reaching their breaking point. Patients are the priority, but nurses also need to prioritize themselves. As stated earlier, if nurses cannot adequately care for themselves, it is very difficult to be able to care for patients. Nurses need to be able to recognize the fatigue in not only coworkers, but also colleagues and themselves.

Burnout could be a result of stress. Stress is different than burn out. Stress involves many pressures that demand too much physically and mentally of the person. Burn out is feeling empty and tired with no emotion and beyond caring about people and things. People going through burn out do not see any hope and are not positive in their current situation. If one is used to a lot of stress they may not realize when burnout happens. (Helpguide to Mental Health and Wellness, 2018)

Research highlights that prolonged emotional exhaustion in nurses leads to cynicism, poor interpersonal relationships and sometimes even inability to perform in a crisis. Essentially, our

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brain tells us that we are not good enough or do not have the energy to perform at a certain level, even if required by higher acuity patients. This is discouraging and nurses cannot give their best to the patients. (Spence Laschinger, H. K., et al., 2015) Other factors of burnout include lifestyle and your personality. Burn out can also lead to use of drugs and alcoholism. (Helpguide to Mental Health and Wellness, 2018).

Caregivers need to seek out help by talking with a friend, co-worker or a professional about their feelings. They need to know their limits and be honest with themselves about their personal situation. The nurse needs to be aware of their feelings such as frustration or anger. If these feelings are noticed, the nursing professional needs to seek professional help immediately. Organizations that offer professional help may be found throughout the community. (Cleveland Clinic, 2014)

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