



FOR FAMILIES & CARE PARTNERS

Preventing Caregiver Burnout

Practical ways to protect your health while caring for someone with Parkinson's

THE MAIN IDEA

Burnout is not a personal failure. It is a warning that the amount of responsibility, stress or isolation has exceeded the support available. Preventing burnout means treating the caregiver's health, rest and backup plan as essential parts of the care plan.

What caregiver burnout looks like

Caregiver burnout is physical, emotional and mental exhaustion that can develop when someone provides too much care for too long without enough rest, help or recovery. It may build gradually, so early warning signs are easy to dismiss.

- **Physical signs** — persistent fatigue, sleep problems, headaches, muscle pain, frequent illness, appetite or weight changes, or neglecting your own medical needs.
- **Emotional signs** — irritability, anger, anxiety, sadness, guilt, hopelessness, resentment, numbness or losing compassion.
- **Behavioral signs** — withdrawing from others, cancelling activities, using more alcohol or drugs, missing work, avoiding care tasks or making more mistakes.
- **Thinking signs** — feeling foggy, forgetful, unable to make decisions, constantly on alert or unable to imagine the situation improving.

CHECK IN EARLY

Strain often appears before full burnout. If several signs last more than a few days, affect safety or keep you from functioning, tell your own healthcare professional and ask for help.

Eight ways to prevent burnout

- 1. Name what is unsustainable:** Write down the tasks, times of day and symptoms that create the most strain. A specific problem is easier to share or redesign.
- 2. Build a real care team:** Identify a primary helper and at least one backup. Include family, friends, neighbors, faith communities, clinicians, social workers and paid services as available.
- 3. Ask for specific help:** Replace “Let me know if you need anything” with a concrete request: sit with him Tuesday, bring dinner, drive to therapy, pick up prescriptions or handle two phone calls.
- 4. Schedule respite before a crisis:** Use brief daily breaks, a regular weekly block and occasional longer relief. Respite can be informal, in-home, adult day care or a short residential stay.
- 5. Protect your own healthcare:** Keep medical and dental visits, refill your prescriptions, sleep as regularly as possible, move your body and eat consistent meals.
- 6. Set healthy limits:** Decide which tasks you can safely do, which require training and which need another person. Declining an unsafe transfer or an impossible schedule is responsible care.
- 7. Stay connected:** Maintain at least one relationship or activity that is not centered on Parkinson's. Consider a caregiver support group, counselor or spiritual community.
- 8. Review the care plan as Parkinson's changes:** More falls, nighttime needs, hallucinations, swallowing problems or hands-on assistance may mean the current plan needs professional help or a higher level of support.

A simple weekly burnout-prevention plan

Protect	Examples	My plan
Daily reset	10–20 quiet minutes, walk, music, breathing, prayer, reading	_____
Sleep	Consistent bedtime; share overnight duties when possible	_____
Body	Meal, hydration, movement and medication reminders	_____
Connection	Call a friend, attend a group or spend time outside the care role	_____
Relief	A scheduled period when another person is responsible	_____
My healthcare	Appointment, counseling, refill or symptom follow-up	_____

How to ask for help

Try a short, direct request that names the task and time:

SAMPLE LANGUAGE

"I am reaching my limit and need dependable help. Could you stay with Pat every Thursday from 2:00 to 4:00 for the next month while I attend appointments and rest? I will leave the medication schedule and emergency contacts."

- **If the answer is no**, ask whether the person can handle a smaller task or help identify someone else.
- **If family discussions are difficult**, ask a social worker, counselor, clergy member or care manager to help lead a care-planning meeting.

For caregivers of Veterans

The VA Caregiver Support Program offers education, coaching, peer support, referrals and respite-related resources. Some caregivers may qualify for additional benefits through the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers. Contact the Caregiver Support Line at 1-855-260-3274 or the caregiver support team at the Veteran's VA facility.

When more help is needed now

- **Contact your healthcare professional soon if** stress is interfering with sleep, work, relationships, decision-making or your ability to provide safe care; or if anxiety, depression, anger or physical symptoms persist.
- **Reassess the care arrangement if** you are being injured, cannot safely transfer the person, are awake much of the night, miss medications, leave the person unsafely unattended or feel afraid you may lose control.
- **Call or text 988 in the United States if** you or another caregiver has thoughts of suicide, feels there is no reason to live or needs immediate crisis support. Press 1 for the Veterans Crisis Line.

CALL 911

If there is immediate danger, a suicide attempt, intent to harm yourself or another person, severe confusion or behavior that cannot be managed safely. Do not leave a person at immediate risk alone.

A five-minute caregiver check-in

- **Ask yourself:** How exhausted am I today—physically, emotionally and mentally?
- **Ask yourself:** What task feels most difficult or unsafe?
- **Ask yourself:** When is my next uninterrupted break?
- **Ask yourself:** Who knows how I am really doing?
- **Ask yourself:** What is one specific request I can make today?
- **Ask yourself:** Do I need professional or emergency support?

Trusted resources

- **Parkinson's Foundation — Caring for the Care Partner:** <https://www.parkinson.org/resources-support/carepartners/caring-for-self>
- **Parkinson's Foundation Helpline:** 1-800-4PD-INFO (1-800-473-4636)
- **VA Caregiver Support Program:** <https://www.caregiver.va.gov/> • 1-855-260-3274
- **VA Respite Care:** <https://www.caregiver.va.gov/support/Respite.asp>
- **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline:** Call or text 988

Recovery Health Tech contact: Val Brown • 1-504-450-6279 • val@recoveryhealthtech.com