**When You Know Someone Experiencing Caregiver Burnout**

If you haven’t yet encountered a friend or family member who is caregiving for an older or disabled loved one, there is no doubt you will eventually. Here are the signs that someone you care about is burning out from family caregiving:

1. Trying to do it all themselves. Your friend Jessica has been spending every night sleeping on her mother’s couch since her mom recently had major surgery. Despite other siblings in the area, you notice that Jessica is the only family member involved in care.
2. Change in appearance. Everyone has always envied your friend Denise for her perfectly coifed hairstyles, well-manicured nails, and desirable figure. Since Denise started taking care of her grandfather who has cancer, she has lost a lot of weight and doesn’t seem to pay the same attention to the way she dresses or grooms.
3. *They never talk about anything fun.* Friends and family struggling with caregiver burnout generally discuss only what they “have to do.” This involves caregiving duties, work responsibilities and perhaps taking care of their kids. There is no mention of vacation, meeting friends, a great movie they’ve seen or a fun event they are looking forward to.

**How Do You Respond?**

Offer your help. Offer it again and again. Typically, a family or friend in the throes of caregiver burnout will refuse help the first few times it is offered. Their mindset may be that they don’t want to “bother” anyone or they don’t want to have to “train” someone how to provide care. If that is the case, start suggesting small ways you can help. Here are some conversation starters that might get the ball rolling:

“I’m going to the grocery store. What can I pick up for you?”

“I just hired a kid to shovel my walkway. I was going to just have him do yours too—is that ok?”

“I’d love to watch the game with your father-in-law while you catch up on your paperwork. Would it be all right if I stop by on Sunday?”

Most family caregivers are desperate for help but don’t want to burden others. Keep offering to let them know you are serious about being supportive. When they finally accept your help, it will mean much more than you can imagine.

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