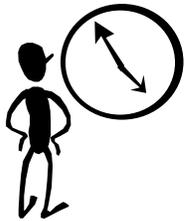


TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF WHILE YOU TAKE CARE OF EVERYONE ELSE!

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Are you tired? Crabby? Are you sometimes sick and tired of caring? You bring hope and healing to your patients and families every day. Yet who brings that same sense of hope to you, the care provider? It is easy to get burned out being a caregiver 24 hours a day! How do you cope when caring gets to be routine?



The caregivers' job is never done. You are "on call" 24 hours each day, 7 days each week. Death knows no holiday, birthday, anniversary or vacation. Death does not stop for the flu or because you are just plain tired. You have chosen a profession that requires constant availability and vigilance. You must be ready to serve at the ring of the phone. When families need you, they need you **NOW**.

If you are to continue to be the kind of caring, competent and compassionate person you are now, you must find some ways to replenish the well, to recharge the batteries and to renew the spirit. Taking a vacation may be one of these ways, but vacation days are few and far between and weekends simply don't exist for caregivers! So, you must find some ways to create moments of healing rather than wait either for your vacation or your own death in order to rest!



Think of energy in terms of pennies. Everyone starts out every day with so many pennies of their pocket. Some have lots of pennies (energy) while some have very few "pennies". The goal is to end up at the end of every day with at least 1

“penny” in your pocket. This “penny” could be used to pay back the (energy) “debt” you have accumulated or saved for a “rainy day” or spent in other ways.

We know that some families are having very difficult times and may be tough to deal with. They may require far more effort than others. We might consider those families to be more “expensive” in terms of energy required to work with them than other families. That does not mean we cannot work with them or that we will serve them any less. It does mean, however, that some families are simply more “expensive” than others.

Being able to identify those people and events that require more of our energy is the first step in taking care of yourself. Once we have identified how much energy we will need to “spend”, we can use our “pennies” more wisely. Is it worth a “penny” to become upset over something quite minor or can you save your “pennies” for the things that really do make a difference? Being able to identify and categorize our stressors makes “spending decisions” much easier.



When we fail to prioritize our “To Do Lists” and our “Emotional Expense List”, we tend to spend the same amount of energy on everything. If everything is a crisis, then the “bank” gets depleted very quickly and we run out of “pennies” (energy) with very little chance of making a deposit.



We are like sponges and absorb a little of each event and each person we deal with during the day. Most of the time we are able to let much of that stress go and we can often “wring” the sponge out before it becomes too full. But sometimes we become “super saturated” and we end up carrying far more than is humanly possible. When that happens, we tend to “leak” back onto the ones we feel most comfortable with: our spouse and our

family. Then, they too, become victims of your “caring overload” and no one has any “pennies” to spare.



Here are a few simple ways to begin to take care of yourself and to deposit a few “pennies” in the bank. If you can make a deposit once in awhile, you will be able to weather many more “storms” and deal more effectively with those people and events that are very “expensive” for you. Keep track of your “deposits” and make sure you have a balanced account.

- ☺ Acknowledge your feelings.
- ☺ Embrace whatever you are feeling. Allow yourself to experience every emotion. Move *through* the emotion rather than allowing it to move you.
- ☺ Find ways to express your anger in non-destructive ways. Close the door to your office and pound the chair, squeeze a stress ball or scribble furiously for 3 minutes. Don’t let the anger stay deep inside where it can quickly turn into a volcano.
- ☺ Skip the self-judgment. Let the judgment of others pass through you without damage.
- ☺ Forgive yourself for whatever you believe you have done or not done.
- ☺ Release the hurts, the anger, the guilt. Be careful what you release. Once released, you cannot have that hurt, anger or guilt again.
- ☺ Work TOWARDS something....not away from something.
- ☺ Practice forgiving yourself for living.
- ☺ Concentrate on YOU for 10 minutes. Learn to listen to yourself.





- ☺ Take care of yourself physically. Exercise when you can, even a walk around the parking lot will help. Eat correctly at least 80% of the time. Forgive yourself for the other 20%!
- ☺ Take 3 deep breaths several times a day. Stop and simply BE. Enjoy the sense of being alive. The alternative is abit less appealing.
- ☺ Take a 5-minute mental “vacation”. Find a comfortable chair, sit back, close your eyes and simply daydream. Visualize your favorite place to be and BE THERE...see it, smell it, feel it. For 5 minutes, go fishing or golfing or skiing. It’s not quite the same as actually being there, but it is better than being crabby all day.
- ☺ Think of stress as a TV program...now change the channel.
- ☺ GO outside and chew a piece of gum. Blow bubbles or wash the limo. Get moving to release some of the stress.
- ☺ Spend 5 minutes a day appreciating the people who work for you, those who live with you and those who love you. Don’t forget to look in the mirror and appreciate that person too! Put a “penny” in your pot every time you think (or say) something nice!
- ☺ Put some wonder back into your world.
- ☺ Let the light within you shine. It might become someone’s ray of hope.
- ☺ Never, ever, ever give up. Keep swimming. Keep breathing!
- ☺ Look for HOPE. Insist on JOY every day.

You are valuable. How do you measure your worth? By what you do or who you are? You can choose to value and honor yourself...or not. The choice is yours.

If compassion does not include yourself, it is incomplete. Remember that life is like an echo: what you send out, comes back to you. So spend a “penny” to earn a “penny” and bank a few away for those times when life gets more expensive and you simply have to “get up and go when your get-up-and-go has gotten up and gone”!

Take care of yourself so you can continue to care for others. Good luck and may your penny pot always be full.

