

Pathways

SERVING FAMILIES AND CAREGIVERS OF BRAIN IMPAIRED ADULTS AND THE FRAIL ELDERLY

Sustainable Self-Care

Am I Suffering from Compassion Fatigue?

by Julie Interrante, MA



FATIGUE FROM CARING FOR OTHERS

affects the quality of our lives, our families, friends and loved ones. While the desire to care is real, an overdeveloped sense of needing to help and underdeveloped sense of one's own life and needs can short circuit our best intentions. For most caregivers, it means we also

come to the work of care-giving by way of being trained by culture, family or religion, to put others before ourselves. Becoming aware of compassion fatigue is the first step in dealing with and preventing it. If you sense you're suffering from compassion fatigue, you likely are.

Symptoms of Compassion Fatigue

- Excessive blaming
- Bottled up emotion
- Isolation
- Complaining
- Substance abuse
- Chronic physical ailments, i.e., intestinal difficulties, headaches, recurrent infections
- Mentally and physically tired
- Apathy, sadness, loss of interest, lack of motivation for pleasurable activities
- Difficulty concentrating
- Denial of problems
- Poor self care, i.e., hygiene, eating habits, lack of sleep
- Recurring dreams/nightmares
- Addictive or compulsive behaviors, i.e., overeating, sexual acting out, overspending, gambling, excessive computer, phone or video gaming

If you are experiencing one or more of these symptoms, you are probably suffering from compassion fatigue. It is important to begin the journey to sustainable self care. Sustainable self care has physical, emotional and spiritual implications and can be practiced on a daily basis.

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Sustainable Self-Care, continued from page 1

Emotional Practices for True Self Care

- Practice being kind to yourself
- Allow, honor and feel your feelings
- Remind yourself to take life on life's terms
- Accept your humanness and imperfection
- Remember, 'progress not perfection'
- Family and friends may not be able to be there for you when you need them
- Share your feelings and thoughts with someone who understands and will honor and validate you
- Notice what makes you smile and put more of that in your day
- Trust yourself, life and God
- Relax and breathe
- Express emotions and feelings

For many caregivers, the biggest challenge is self criticism and guilt. Many of us feel we should be able to keep our loved one comfortable and happy all the time. We often feel guilty when we get angry, frustrated or take time for ourselves. The truth is, we are only human and cannot change the illness, or circumstances of our loved ones' lives. Caregiving is a spiritual practice and offers us an opportunity to know ourselves more deeply in the midst of change and difficulty. Taking time for ourselves, slowing down, and softening are important components of self care.

Spiritual Health for Caregivers

- SLOW DOWN**, take time to breathe and allow best solution to unfold
- PRESENT** center yourself and feel your core
- INTUITION** follow your hunches
- RESPECT** stay in touch with your beliefs, experiences and needs
- INSIGHT** share/invite others to experience your situation
- TRUST** yourself and others
- UNIVERSAL** you are not alone
- AWARE** Be aware of what you are feeling
- LISTEN** to yourself and others/stay present
- HONEST** know yourself, strengths and limits
- EMOTION** all emotions have information/listen and feel them
- ALLOW** there is enough space in the universe for everything, breathe
- LOVE** is the essence of me and fuels Life energy
- THANKFUL** being thankful is a spiritual practice and promotes well-being and humility
- HEART** measure your Life energy and rest more often

This is just the beginning. Sustainable self care is a daily practice and requires commitment to one's self. It is also very helpful to have connection, love and support of other caregivers who understand and relate to our lives and stories. It can also be helpful to attend workshops, seminars and retreats for caregivers. These are all places to connect with others, share resources and practice sustainable self care.



JULIE INTERRANTE, MA, is committed to the evolution of the self through the power and wisdom of one's own soul. She teaches the importance of embracing pain which breaks open the heart, catalyzing great courage, trust and creativity for living life fully. She explores the importance of vulnerability and tenderness and ultimately offers a new lens on life's gift of transition. She has more than 25 years' experience in working with people in the midst of life-altering circumstances including illness and aging. She is an adjunct professor in the Department of Psychology at Sacramento City College. Julie is a speaker, minister and writer. She is the author of *The Power of a Broken-Open Heart*. She offers classes and workshops as well as individual and group counseling in Sacramento, California. A gifted speaker and teacher, Julie brings humor, compassion and a deep respect for life to all that she does. Please visit her website at www.julieinterrante.com

Getting Lost

A poem by Mary Swisher

This Morning
You did not pretend to read the paper.
I read the front page
Holding back tears.
Afraid to start
A conversation you might get
Lost in, like some brambly
Black berry mound.

I clear my throat and say
"Afghanistan, this is about Afghanistan."
You come as from a dream
And say, "Your eyes are so mysterious this morning."
How can I not love you for this
Mischievous change of subject?

You look deep in my eyes your brown eyes unguarded
Like an innocent child.
"mysterious", I say "In what way?"
"too-ra-loo-ra-loo-ral" you sing back,
And I have become lost in your world,
A bramble of enchanted
Connections for me to untangle.

From: *I Am Somebody: Bringing Dignity and Compassion to Alzheimer's Caregiving*, by Frances H. Kakugawa, p. 144

INVITATION TO CONTRIBUTE TO CAREGIVER'S COLUMN

Please feel free to submit your contribution to email address. It is best to type your review in a Microsoft Word document. Be sure to include the title, author, a brief description, and mention how this was beneficial for you. The newsletter editor may need to make changes to your submission for various reasons, including spelling/grammar check and to adjust article to meet spacing requirements.

A Dose of Inspiration

"Be thankful for what you have; you'll end up having more. If you concentrate on what you don't have, you will never have enough."

OPRAH WINFREY

"Gratitude turns what we have into enough, and more. It turns denial into acceptance, chaos into order, confusion into clarity . . . it makes sense of our past, brings peace for today, and creates a vision for tomorrow."

MELODY BEATTIE

"Your journey has moved you for the greater good. It was exactly what it needed to be. Don't think you've lost time. It took each and every situation you have encountered to bring you to the now, and now is right on time."

ASHA TYSON

"Nothing can bring you peace but yourself."

RALPH WALDO EMMERSON



Training for Caregivers

Del Oro Caregiver Resource Center provides education and training on a variety of issues related to caregiving. We cover practical, hands-on training in subjects related to research, disease specific information, stress reduction, self-care, and other relevant caregiving issues. Please visit our website at www.deloro.org to access our calendar of events. If there is a topic you would like to see covered in your area, please email us at crc@deloro.org.



10th Annual Cook-off and Fundraiser benefiting Del Oro Caregiver Resource Center

Thursday, June 18th 2015
5:30 – 8:30pm
Divine Savior Catholic Church
 9079 Greenback Lane, Orangevale

Please join us for this festive event featuring a cook-off by local chefs, live entertainment, silent auction and raffle prizes! To purchase tickets or for information on sponsorship opportunities, please call:

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How would you like your tickets? Mailed to the address above Will call at the door

Make Check Payable to: Del Oro Caregiver Resource Center, 8421 Auburn Blvd., Suite 265, Citrus Heights, CA 95610



ON MAY 5TH, we are asking you to participate in another huge and historic event for our region, the BIG Day of Giving, where, over a 24 hour period from midnight to midnight, Del Oro Caregiver Resource Center will join with 500 other nonprofits to raise \$5 million, engage 25,000 donors, and make our region #1 as the most generous community in the country on this national day of giving!

How you can help on May 5th:

- Make a donation (starting as small as \$25) to Del Oro Caregiver Resource Center at www.bigdayofgiving.org.
- Spread the word. Tell your friends, post on Facebook, and tweet about it. This is an opportunity to be part of something really big. Help us get there.

Be a part of the \$5 Million giving community and help us improve our community by joining with others on May 5th, the Big Day of Giving!

Help Us Restore Funding to the Caregiver Resource Centers

DEL ORO CAREGIVER RESOURCE CENTER (Del Oro) is one of eleven Caregiver Resource Centers in the State. In 2009, Caregiver Resource Centers (CRC) funding was cut by 74%, one of the largest funding cuts of any health and human services program. Our statewide system is seeking restoration of funding in the amount of \$7.6 million, back to 2008 levels.

California family caregivers are the forgotten workforce of our long-term services and supports system (LTSS). Nearly six million unpaid caregivers—typically family and friends—provide long-term care in California, valued at \$47 billion annually. (UCLA, 2011). While family caregivers are often credited with managing intense levels of care, and preventing, or delaying institutionalization, there is limited support available to them with current funding levels. Moreover, as the State continues to promote managed health care, and home and community-based services, family caregivers will become an even more critical component of the LTSS.

Restoration of funding is a lengthy process and we need your help! Please contact your Assembly Member and Senator, with a plea to restore the California Caregiver Resource Center funding. To find your State Representatives, visit <http://findyourrep.legislature.ca.gov/>. We will provide periodic updates via Del Oro Caregiver Resource Center's website at www.deloro.org and at our Facebook page. Thank you in advance for your support of our efforts.

UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, "Stressed and Strapped: Caregivers in California." September 2011.

New Workshops for Family Caregivers Coming Soon!

As a caregiver anticipating having to move your loved one is a difficult time. After the move can be challenging as well. Carol Kinsel, GCM, and Stefani R. Wilson, MS, MFT, invite you to join the conversation where we will explore what can feel like an emotional roller coaster ride for the primary caregiver and discuss strategies promoting a smooth transition before and after "the move." In order to address individual concerns, we are keeping the group size small and recommend you register by May 6th (916-965-5565) for the Sacramento workshop that best suits your needs:

- **Anticipating the Transition to a Care Home:**
When: Wednesday, May 13th
Time: 1-4pm
(Limited respite available)
- **Coping with the Care Home Transition:**
When: Wednesday, May 20th
Time: 1-4pm

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