

Dr. Maria Mouratidis Talks About Compassion Fatigue

Credit: BrainLine.org (Produced by Victoria Tilney McDonough and Brian King)

Video Link: <http://www.brainline.org/content/multimedia.php?id=1083>

Dr. Maria Mouratidis: Compassion fatigue is a hazard of caring. It occurs when you feel like you have given everything you have, it's that feeling of feeling drained or empty that it feels hard to care. It's common in health care providers and in caregivers of all kinds, including family caregivers.

It's often difficult for family members and health care providers to deal with because they often feel guilty that they have that tiredness, it's not that they don't care anymore, it's hard to keep caring that much and to sustain that especially if someone is recovering from an injury for a long period of time, that is very emotionally draining and exhausting. Often times the caregiver is so focused on the needs of the person that is injured, they aren't taking care of their own physical or emotional needs.

The understandable neglect of that, builds up overtime. We work with both staff and family caregivers about how to maintain your stamina, to keep your endurance up. To find ways that nurture and take care of yourself so you can be there for the long haul, and it is OK to take a break it doesn't mean that you don't care and to use the supports that are available to you. Compassion fatigue is a real element, it's different from burnout, it's not like being overworked or not liking your job, or not caring. It is a natural part of caregiving, we don't tend to talk about it as much. And it is important if anyone is feeling that way you understand first that it is normal, and secondly that it doesn't mean that they don't care or that they are doing anything wrong and three, that it's OK to talk about.