

Caregiver Fatigue

Why is this important?

Caring for children can be very rewarding but it can also involve many stressors, especially under the current circumstances. With children unable to attend school, you may be faced with limited supports to help care for them. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, children attended school and adults were able to meet other commitments such as engaging in paid work, household jobs and caring for other children. Now, adults are trying to juggle these tasks in addition to caring for school aged children.

If children have disabilities, caring for them may be even more stressful, challenging and difficult. Caregiver fatigue has often been associated with caring for a person who is elderly, has a chronic illness, or has a disability; however, during the upcoming months, many caregivers for children might also experience caregiver fatigue due to the added stress of the pandemic.

Giving yourself permission to take care of yourself is important so that you are in the best mental and emotional state to care for any children in your care. Understanding what caregiver fatigue is, how to identify the symptoms, and how to manage your stress to avoid it can help decrease the impact of caregiver fatigue.

What is caregiver fatigue?

Caregiver fatigue is “a debilitating psychological condition brought about by unrelieved stress.” By the time most caregivers suspect caregiver fatigue, they’re already suffering many symptoms. Symptoms of caregiver fatigue can include:

- Anxiety, depression, irritability
- Lack of energy
- Overwhelming fatigue, constantly exhausted
- Sleep problems
- Change in eating habits
- Feelings of hopelessness and helplessness
- Neglecting your own physical and emotional needs



To prevent or reduce caregiver fatigue, here are a few tips:

- Ask for help! Reach out to a friend, family member or community agency. They may be able to help, even from a distance.
- Take breaks throughout your day.
- Exercise, eat well and get enough sleep.
- Start your day 15 minutes before children wake up and do something for you. Enjoy your first cup of coffee in silence, meditate, stretch...something, anything, just for you!
- Make a list of everything you need to do during the day. See if there are any items you can delegate to someone else.
- Focus on things you can control. Some examples of things you can control could be how you react to situations and where you invest your time and energy.
- Set realistic goals. Break larger tasks into smaller manageable steps and focus on one step at a time.
- Explore community agencies or supports that might be able to help. One example is [Strongest Families](#). They offer family-centered, online care that is customized to the family's needs.

Resources

GNB Social Development: Family Supports for Children with Disabilities
A voluntary program that provides social work support and financial resources to families to assist with the care and support required to meet the special developmental needs of their child with disability.

New Brunswick Multicultural Association
A bilingual umbrella organization for immigrant-serving agencies and ethno-cultural associations in New Brunswick. Find out more by visiting the website or contact them at (506) 453-1091 to ask to be connected to your local immigrant-serving agency or ethno-cultural association, who can help you connect to same language speakers and other supports.

New Brunswick Association for Community Living: Strong Voices for Families
A provincial program offering support to families who have a child with an intellectual or developmental disability. Visit the website or call 1-866-622-2548 (choose option 2).

Vitas Healthcare: Signs of Caregiver Burnout and How to Prevent It

Web MD: Recognizing Caregiver Burnout

HelpGuide: Caregiver Stress and Burnout

