

When Caring for Others Leaves Little Room for You

By Allison Sramek, MSc, MFT, MBACP Registered

Parents and carers often spend so much time supporting others that their own needs quietly move to the bottom of the list.

There are appointments to attend, forms to complete, routines to manage, problems to solve and constant worries about the future. Much of this work happens behind the scenes and often goes unnoticed by others. Over time, carrying so much responsibility can leave little space for rest, reflection or looking after yourself.

Many people tell themselves they should be coping better.

They wonder why they feel so exhausted, overwhelmed or emotionally drained when they're "just doing what needs to be done."

The truth is that caring for someone else—particularly over a long period of time—can be emotionally demanding. Feeling tired, irritable or stretched beyond your limits doesn't mean you're failing. It often means you've been carrying a great deal for a very long time.

Burnout doesn't always look dramatic.

Sometimes it looks like struggling to switch off.

Feeling disconnected from yourself.

Losing patience more quickly than usual.

Feeling guilty whenever you take a break.

Or simply feeling as though you're running on empty.

One question I often encourage people to consider is:

"What would help me feel even slightly more supported right now?"

The answer doesn't have to be big.

It might be asking someone to help with one small task. Taking ten quiet minutes for yourself. Accepting support when it's offered. Speaking with someone you trust. Or giving yourself permission to rest without feeling guilty.

Small moments of care won't remove every challenge, but they can help you reconnect with yourself while continuing to care for those who matter most.

Supporting yourself isn't selfish.

Looking after your own wellbeing is part of being able to continue supporting others.

You don't have to carry everything alone.

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