Compassion Burnout as a Nurse by Carrie Kiekhaefer

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Nursing can be tiring, and lead us to exhaustion, but we wouldn't do it if we didn't love what we did. We do it to make a difference and to ultimately help out the patient in need. It's with that patient in mind that we need to keep ourselves from getting overwhelmed, and more importantly know the warning signs, so we can take the necessary steps.

As a nurse our job is never done. We are constantly on the move working with one patient after the other, and it's hard to see them fall prey to an illness that we couldn't stop. So what exactly is compassion burnout? It happens when we care for patients that have a life threatening illness and we are powerless to do anything about it. We are overcome with sympathy, and a strong urge to make the pain disappear.

I'd be kidding myself if I didn't say that as an RN I haven't experienced compassion burnout before, because I have. I got to the point where I was tired all the time, I got horrible stomach aches, and worst yet I didn't enjoy what I did. Then one day I said enough is enough. I knew the warning signs and did nothing about it but today I said, "Things need to change."

I took a couple steps to get back to 100% so that I could take care of my patients the way they deserved. I begin to do things around the house that I enjoyed, went to the movies, and just relaxed at home. I made sure I got enough sleep every night, and made lists of everything that was out of my control. Before you knew it I was back to my old self.

Everyoneâ€™s experience with compassion burnout is different. Here are several signs to help you recognize either now or in the future:

Feelings of tiredness

Lack of enjoyment in things you usually enjoy

Overeating, drinking too much, or overspending

Excessive blaming at home and on the job

Physical ailments such as back pain or stomach aches

Now that you know the signs what are you supposed to do to get better? Here are several ideas to get you back to 100%:

Do things that you enjoy such as gardening, movies, sports, walking, etc.

Make sure you stay healthy. Get lots of sleep, eat healthy food (http://www.prnhealthservices.com/health-news/national-nutrition-month-2011/53), and get plenty of exercise.

Learn to say "NO." As a nurse things can get tiring and overwhelming so it's important to say no to friends, peers, and supervisors when you are already busy.

Recognize that you can't do everything and that just being there for your patient can mean everything in the world.

These are just some ideas and are not requirements for preventing compassion burnout. If you have your own ideas to help you stay on the top of your game, by all means do it. As I just said these should be used as a way to prevent. You should hopefully already being doing these things. Take time out of your day to have a little "me" time. Do the things you enjoy doing, and take care of you. Nursing is the best job in the world, so let's make sure that we continue to enjoy it, not only for ourselves but for our patients, too.

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Since 1995, Nurses PRN has used resources, experience and expertise to coordinate the match between healthcare professionals and facilities. Established and headquartered in Appleton, Wisconsin â€“ Nurses PRN now provides seasoned healthcare professionals to over 1,200 facilities across the country.

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