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CCE workshop helps caregivers care for themselves

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[关键词] Continuing Education; Psychological

What happens when people in care-giving roles forget to care for themselves?

A forthcoming workshop at The University of Auckland's Centre for Continuing Education (CCE) addresses this difficult and potentially dangerous situation.

Led by psychologist Dr Louisa Walker, "The Cost of Caring: Self-

Care for the Caregiver", will focus on understanding the effects of, and learning how to cope with, the demands of being a caregiver. For many who enter into that role, either professionally or privately, the risk of emotional, physical and behavioural burn-out is high.

"Caregivers comprise what is dubbed the 'sandwich generation', a term describing someone who is simultaneously raising a family and caring for an ageing parent, while often working full

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time," says Dr Walker. "It's ironic, but perhaps not surprising, that those who do so much to look after others can forget to take care of themselves."

Dr Walker says warning signs for "compassion fatigue" include excessive tiredness, a change in appetite, increased sadness or anxiety, and a general sense of futility. She says it is crucial that caregivers learn how to identify and understand such signs and know how to manage either for the caregiver or the patient. "Self-

care is a vital part of being a good caregiver, but most people don't realise how necessary it is. The workshop not only provides a list of resources for support people and organisations, but also offers a self

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assessment exercise to establish stress levels among participants. Above all, the workshop aims to help ensure caregivers don't inadvertently hurt those they are most trying to help," says Dr Walker.

Louisa Walker works at Tamaki Healthcare PHO as the Primary Mental Health Project Manager. American-

born, she holds a PhD in Counselling Psychology from the University of Idaho and is a member of the New Zealand Psychological Society and the American Psychological Association.

