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Anyone who has been a caregiver in their life whether to family or professionally can testify to the mental load you take on in order to care for the ones you support. You need to be strong willed and have endless compassion to care for individuals with disabilities. At times these individuals can be aggressive both verbally and physically. You are required to be constantly "on" or available to meet their every need. When we wake up in the morning we get to choose how and where we spend our day. The people that we support do not always get this luxury. They are often told what to do, where to do it, how long they are expected to take to complete the tasks and a mirage of other limits on their daily life. That is mentally exhausting to have someone else run your life for you. Now, imagine that you are the person that is setting these rules into place for them. They are going to be easily frustrated with you and sometimes feel the need to lash out at you for some sense of control over their own autonomy. So, you go to work every day and have to care for individuals that don't always like you or want to be nice to you even though your sole job is to care for them and provide them the best quality of life that you possibly can. Imagine what years of that can do to your psyche. That is where the term known as "compassion fatigue" comes into play. Simply put it means, "an intense state of mental and physical exhaustion that can develop in caregivers and helping professionals over time." As a DSP we get into this field because we have a desire to help those who can't always help themselves. I love what I do for the people I support everyday and watching them develop new skills or gain confidence that the before lacked as a direct result of something I was able to teach or coach them on is a beyond rewarding feeling. However, I am still a human being and I am not immune to human emotions and burnout. We don't usually get into this work for the money because frankly we don't get paid enough to do what we do everyday. We get into this field for the love of caring for others. With that being said, as I mentioned before I AM STILL A HUMAN BEING. I have needs, I have bills to pay, children to feed and another on the way. Money whether we like it or not is what makes the world spin round. So many DSP's that I have known in the past to leave this line of work was not simply due to compassion fatigue but also the stress and weight of not being able to pay their bills. Sometimes we need to leave a job that we love simply because another job would pay us a more livable wage and in this field in particular not only is that damaging to the caregiver emotionally as we get attached to the people we serve but it could be catastrophic for the supported individual. Unfortunately, there is a large number of supported individuals that their only human interaction is through paid support staff. Imagine you have an ever-revolving door of people that enter your home, take care of you in your most vulnerable state, know everything about you and then after you've finally learned to trust them, they leave. How would that make you

feel? Personally, I would feel like an object that needed to be taken care of rather than a human being with feelings. At the end of the day, we all get up every day and go to work to make money to support the lifestyles we want to live. If we cannot support our lifestyles with the income we have then we are forced to look elsewhere. We need the financial support to be able to stay and continue our important work with these individuals. I don't want the individuals I support to have to worry about me leaving them because I don't make enough money to keep the rent paid. That's not their burden to bear, but we are making it that way when we don't support our DSP's adequately for the hard work they do.