

Care for Caregivers – the reality?

Being a caregiver is a stressful and demanding job. There is usually very little, if any opportunity to prepare for a new caregiving situation. The well-being of the caregiver requires priority consideration. Thought must be given to the fate of the care recipient if the caregiver becomes unable to continue with caregiving responsibilities. Caregivers are susceptible to depression, illness, physical exhaustion and emotional exhaustion. Any of these conditions will easily interfere with a person's ability to be an effective caregiver.

The following are suggestions for maintaining caregiver well-being:

- Become informed about the care recipient's health issues and any expected changes in behavior.
- Accept the facts and deal with your situation the best that you can.
- Seek professional help whenever necessary.
- Share the burden of caring and caregiving with family members and other interested persons.
- Talk about your problems with a trusted person.
- Don't be too shy, proud, or afraid to seek help with caregiving.
- Become aware of the limits of your caregiving abilities.
- Maintain social activities and important relationships.
- Get away from the responsibilities from time to time.
- Pace yourself. You may be responsible for caregiving for many years.
- Work off anger with physical activity.
- Plan ahead to avoid crises where possible.
- Live one day at a time.
- Recognize the worst-case scenario, but hope for the best.
- Join a family support group.
- Keep your sense of humor.

How much of all of the above is doable?

What is the reality?

Too much expected of caregivers

Before I was a caregiver, I was one of the most positive people you could imagine. Now I don't like reading articles and posts about how positive a caregiver should be. The fact is that there's not much positive about it. **The long lists of things we should do to prepare for what's to come....**the insistence that we keep a life for ourselves....the useless ideas about coping....the admonition to get enough rest. Are you kidding??? When you're actually in the situation - a situation that you didn't want, don't like and never will - with the patient yelling, screaming and demanding at you - when you don't have the skills to take care of the person but are expected to give up your whole life to develop those skills - how is it possible? I was a caregiver for 3 direly ill family members over a period of 5 years. All with various stages of dementia and other diseases as well. Do you think I wanted to live one day at a time? No, I wanted to look forward to something fun and interesting again, like I did before. Do you think there was money left over for professional help for me? Do you think I had energy for a social life after heaving them and wheelchairs and walkers in and out of the car? Getting them to many doctor appointments every week? Managing the care, bank accounts, health issues, personally removing all the doors so their wheelchairs could get through, cleaning up their bodily fluids from floor and beds? And more and more? **Knowing it would never end till they die? I wanted my life back, and I have it back now. I'll never get in a situation where I have to be a caregiver again. Stop sugarcoating the job. It's never good and never can be.**