

Caregiving
or
Just how did I get myself into this?

Some days I have absolutely no idea just how I got here but they say that everything you do in life leads you to where you are going. I'd sure like to know who 'they' are and ask them just where the heck I am supposed to **be** going. Unfortunately they likely wouldn't tell me and insist that I find out on my own.

Anyway...where I find myself at the moment is more or less 'full time care giver' to my elderly parents. Oh yeah, never fear life is anything but dull in our house!

Challenges

Time...where did it all go?

One aspect of care giving is that it can take up a lot of your day, so you'd better be organized and very flexible. Setting specific times for things even as simple as laundry can really make a difference.

Over the past two years my mom has become a laundry hoarder. She can have it all over her bedroom and not even realize it. I gave up a long time ago trying to get her to put things away on her own or even into the laundry basket.

She's not purposely trying to drive me crazy (I think) it's just that she can get sidetracked faster than I can sit here and type the word. I've slowly learned that when I need to do her laundry it is a project from start to finish.

In the kitchen...back away from the stove!

When dealing with elderly parents it is often best to keep them **far away** from the stove. Mom used to do most of the cooking until about 4 years ago but now I just don't feel comfortable letting her near sharp knives and hot burners. The safest way she can help is to set the table or make salads.

Organization

as in Val... "Do you know where ____ is?" Well...they would know if they had put it back where it belongs. Unfortunately their forgetter is definitely getting better than their rememberer.

Here again I've learned I have to be totally dedicated. When I discover a common item that everyone uses and it's not where it belongs I've been known to stop in mid stride and put it away. It just isn't worth having to hunt for it later.

Energy

As in don't even think about trying to be Super Kid. Who cares if the kitchen floor is a bit grungy? Even June Cleaver didn't do it all. Hey wait a minute... She didn't do any of it. That was a TV show!

Scheduling three people's appointment plus working on my writing career is no ordinary task as nine out of ten people reading this article can tell you.

It would be nice to have a life in here somewhere!

The absolute NUMBER ONE thing we care givers must remember that we really do have our own lives.

We can only look after others if we look after ourselves first. Thanks Dr. Phil!

I need to make certain that there are specific days and times during every day that are absolutely mine unless of course there's a genuine crisis in the works.

Fresh air and exercise are also extremely important. Every day that I can I go for a long walk.

Support

Another area that is absolutely vital is outside support. Outside the family that is. Family members tend to get caught up in being too close to the forest to see trees. They see the 'patient' as they remember them when they used to live with them on a daily basis. Sometimes that can be a very long time ago especially for a sibling.

Fortunately most of us these days have a friend who is in much the same position as we are. My very dear friend Jeana, who is also my massage therapist, has lived through the same challenges in her own family. She is somewhat younger than I am but is definitely a 'wise one'.

Having said that...I am also really fortunate to have my big brother and his family living about five minutes away. He's also a lawyer so he knows all the right questions to ask and all the right people to ask. Of course he doesn't see our parents every day so sometimes it's a wake up call when he does.

Rewards

No kidding there really are some! I guess the biggest one is the fact that at least for the foreseeable future both my parents are healthy enough to still be living at home rather than a care facility. Being able to work on my writing career from home is a very big plus. I'm not tied down to a 'nine to five.' Ick! Been there done that.

Written in 2004

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