

CARE GIVING IS HARD WORK - PART II

By Donna Deos

So last month we began this discussion and I digressed into an example. Today I'd like to take a step back and talk more about the various ways caregivers help.

There is personal care, home care, errands and shopping, transportation and I am sure there are others that are not coming to mind right this minute. Personal care is anything from helping to dress someone, doing their hair, helping them bathe, get dressed, pick out clothes to wear, dressing wounds, reminding them to take medications – maybe even managing the medications, and so on.

Home care is helping with the things around the home, like cleaning, cooking, doing laundry, getting things from various places (attic, basement, the next room) for them, doing yard work, finding professionals to help with items that need to be fixed or addressed that require a professional (or just someone willing and able to mow the lawn) to help.

Errands and shopping sounds pretty self-explanatory, but picking up prescriptions, getting your groceries and dry cleaning. Picking up cards and presents for them to give to their loved ones. Taking them places to do all of these things would fall under this category and transportation.

Transportation is a big one, especially if they have a lot of medical appointments or a very active social life. Church, lunch with friends, family gathering are all important activities for people to keep up with and they need to be able to get to them.

Quality of life is so very important to maintaining confidence, independence and a positive outlook. This is one reason so many seniors get depressed – they become socially isolated in their homes. They don't want to be a burden to anyone so they don't let people know they need help getting to where they want – and need – to go.

Another big obstacle can be needing someone to take you to your medical appointments. And, even more importantly, to go into them with you and listen to what the doctor or other medical professional is saying. Many seniors have hearing issues and don't fully understand what the professionals are telling them. Likewise, they sometimes hear a particular word that triggers them and they don't hear the rest of the discussion – their minds wander or fear sets in.

I'll give you another example here. Yes, back to my Mom – she's full of good examples! She had a doctor's appointment that she went to alone. She came home distraught that she needed a procedure because it "could be cancerous." That's what she heard, that's what she told us



NEED SOMEONE TO LISTEN?

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and we all set to praying and trying to make ourselves feel better. On the day of the procedure Dad and I met the surgeon and the person they had on deck in case they needed them and they said this other person was there "in case it was pre-cancerous" so they could evaluate and do whatever they needed. The key word there was *pre*. Mom, like so many others, heard the dreaded c-word and that was all she heard. We all had a couple of weeks of stress and terror because nobody else was there to listen. If we were we would likely have caught on to what they really said. That, and we would have spoken up and asked questions. It really does help to have another set of ears sometimes no matter what your level of hearing is!

So, back to being a caregiver. Sometimes you do one of these things, sometimes you end up with most or all of them. That is really hard! It becomes a full time job. You may already have a full time job and try to juggle this as well. Been there, done that – and I don't recommend it.

No one should have to do it all on their own. This is when the caregiver needs to speak up, find resources and get the help they need.

Now imagine if the caregiver is a spouse of friend of the same age as the person receiving the care – Wow!!! How much harder does that make all of this?! SOOOO much harder.

Okay, next month we will talk about options for finding the help so no one person has to carry all of that weight! Until then, hang in there – or call me and I'll give you the info sooner.

All my best,

Donna

P.S. I am always here as a resource. If you find yourself the stressed out caregiver who just needs someone to listen and vent too, I am really great at that too. That's the counseling side that I offer and it is one of my favorite parts of what I do: making people feel better, giving them things to think about and do for themselves, and letting them know they are not alone – and they really are a pretty awesome human being who is loved and appreciated. When you are caregiving you sometimes forget all of that because you are often putting yourself last. Not a good place to be and not a good thing to feel. Let me help you feel better!

∞
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QUOTE FOR HALLOWEEN

"Shadows of a thousand years
rise again unseen.

Voices whisper in the trees,
"Tonight is Halloween!"

Dexter Kozen, PhD – Dartmouth College '74

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