Caregiver

As a caregiver for an ailing parent, spouse, child, or other loved one, you are likely to be challenged with multitude of new responsibilities; some can seem overwhelming. You may feel alone, put upon, or resentful. Despite its challenges, caregiving can be rewarding, and there are things you can do to make the caregiving process more pleasurable for both you and your loved one. Providing care for a loved one is an act of compassion, love and devotion. With the advancement of medical treatments, the life expectancy of people with chronic illnesses and disabilities has increased. You may be new to the caregiving process, or you have been providing care for years but realize you are becoming overwhelmed. There are things you can do to help you remain effective without having to sacrifice yourself in the process.

Accept your feelings. Some feelings that you may encounter at one time or another can include anger or resentment, anxiety, worry, guilt and even grief.

Even though you know it is unsound, you may feel angry or resentful towards your loved one. In the case of people who are not feeling well, they may behave in a way that seems ungrateful. Anger or resentment are natural feelings. We all have them. The trouble comes when caregivers start believing they are “bad” for experiencing those natural feelings. You may have good reason to worry about how you are going to manage an already busy schedule to now include added responsibilities of caregiving.

Anxiety and or worry are again, natural feelings. However, some people allow this anxiety or worry to overcome them to the point they have difficulty sleeping, lose concentration and feel “stuck” in how to proceed with things in their life.

Guilt can come in to play for having any of the above feelings. A care giver may also experience feelings of guilt when he o she does not believe good enough care has been provided, and you start to judge yourself on all things you do or do not do. Guilt can also arise from not spending as much time with the other members in the family.

Grief may occur with the loss of a loved one you have been caring for. Grief can also occur when you experience the losses associated with caregiving: time with loved ones, time you no longer have to devote to your own well-being, dreams that you may have had to put on hold.

Acknowledging and accepting these feelings can still result in these feelings lingering and increasing to the point a caregiver feels liking giving up. In order to deal with your feelings, it is important to talk about them. Caregiver support can be found through family or friends who can listen without judgment; places of worship; support groups; therapists, social workers, or mental health counselors.

It is important to tend to your own emotional, social, and physical needs. Caregiving can be a full time job. Allow yourself as a caregiver to be aware of possible burnout and know what outlets you have to be able to take care of your needs. Remember, it is not selfish, it is self-care.