

Caregiving: Adjusting to Your New Role

Caring for a loved one can be difficult on everyone. It may be difficult to accept that "*My father is no longer the strong and powerful man he once was,*" or "*My mother, who was an excellent cook, no longer desires (or remembers how) to cook,*" or "*My significant other and I enjoyed doing things together, now he doesn't recognize me.*" And now they are dependent on you as their caregiver. They are difficult circumstances and understanding the emotions you are feeling and what it means to be a caregiver will help you, your own family members and loved ones through this transition period.

The Adjustment Period

The role of caregiver can bring with it a variety of tasks and responsibilities that require both you and your loved one to make adjustments, as well as competing demands from home and work. You may be a full or part-time caregiver providing hands-on care, a long-distance caregiver, or one who is watching over the care of a loved one in a nursing home or assisted living facility. The caregiver/care-receiver relationship will continue to change as your loved one's care needs increase and more demands are placed on you.

Your loved one is also adjusting to many changes. The loss of freedom, the transition from an active life to one of confinement, and the relinquishment of decision-making power can lead to feelings of worthlessness, anger and sadness. Chronically ill or aging persons are forced to accept help as their abilities begin to decline. Becoming dependent on others can be a frustrating thing to deal with.

Don't despair! Caregiving can also bring with it feelings of accomplishment and the knowledge that you are helping your loved one. Most care-receivers may feel gratitude toward their caregivers and are often relieved that they are no longer burdened with many of the chores required in daily living.

Adjusting to Changes

You cannot control everything that happens to you or to your loved one. But, you do have the power to make active choices about how you are going to deal with the caregiving circumstances in your life. Having a positive attitude, understanding your strengths and weaknesses, being proactive and gathering information through research are just a few of the ways you can begin to take charge of your life. Points to remember:

- A positive attitude goes a long way
- Work with family members so responsibilities can be shared
- Try to anticipate and prepare for changes that may be coming
- Maintain open communication with the care-receiver and if possible, keep them involved in decision-making processes
- Remember, you and your loved one are probably experiencing similar and intense emotions
- Seek professional help from financial advisors, counselors, or an elder care specialist
- Attend a support group and encourage your loved one to do the same
- Make yourself knowledgeable about the aging process and any disease-related information
- Concentrate on the strengths of the care-receiver and help him or her remain as independent as possible

Resources Available

To learn more about your caregiving and resources available to you, log on to www.FOH4YOU.com to access a wealth of articles and community resources.



Employee Assistance Program

We Care, Just Call

1-800-222-0364

1-888-262-7848 TTY Users

www.FOH4YOU.com

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