



Special Issue

What I Learned as a Caregiver: Part 1

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What I learned as a Caregiver: You are not alone

“There are only four kinds of people in the world. Those who have been caregivers; those who are currently caregivers. Those who will be caregivers; and those who will need caregivers.” – First Lady Rosalynn Carter

As of a 2015 combined AARP/National Alliance for Caregiving report (using data collected in 2014), statistics show that over 43 million adults in the U.S. are caring for a chronically ill, terminally ill, disabled, or aged family member. That is almost 1/5th of the adult population.

A caregiver frequently feels alone, like no one around them understands what they’re going through. On top of that, caregivers often feel guilty because they live with the mindset that their biggest responsibility is to take care of their loved one who is sick – and they believe there is nothing they are going through that can be as bad as what is happening to the person they love. They live with “caregiver guilt”.

Almost 1/5th of our nation’s adult population is living with “caregiver guilt”. You are not alone and all that you are feeling is completely normal.

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In November 2003, I became a caregiver to my mom. She was very sick and it took the next 6 months to get the “correct” diagnosis – Idiopathic Pulmonary Fibrosis (IPF). IPF is one form of pulmonary fibrosis (PF), a disease with over 200 forms. Neither of us knew what IPF was or had ever heard of it. Her diagnosis set us on a path unbeknownst to both of us.



What is a caregiver's job? I had never cared for a terminally ill person before, so I had no idea what I should do. At the time, I didn't know of any caregiver support groups to turn to, so I had to figure this out on my own. I hope I can pull from what I learned to help you on your caregiver journey.

Over the next few weeks, I will be sharing ways I found over the years to balance my life and the job I had taken on as a caregiver. It's the toughest job I've ever had. There are good days and then there are "not good" days. It's all a part of the journey.

However, before sharing my experiences, I encourage you to start with a good hard look in the mirror. Tell yourself that caring for yourself is just as important as caring for your loved one; For, if you are not a priority in your life, you will not be fully equipped to care for another.

Here, on this blog, I want you to find hope in a shared community. I hope you know you are not alone. I discovered that there are many resources to help us caregivers stay in tune with ourselves.

... Warmly, Taleena Koch

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