

## Learning and Adapting Throughout the Caregiving Journey

The caregiving journey is indeed an epic one. It brings with it moments of joy and good cheer, as well as experiences of tears and the dull thud of heartache. The journey is punctuated by some detours and great adventures where, the scenery is many a time pleasant and refreshing. But at others, we are greeted by a dry and harsh landscape that resembles that of a desert.

Caregiving has many aspects – physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual etc. Caregivers have to take on various roles too while steering through these different aspects of care – physical carer, navigator, companion, advocate and champion etc. Many of which may be new roles, roles that were not necessarily solicited or asked for.



Often times, the difference between seeing the caregiving journey as a boon or a bane is but a thin line. One which I feel is governed mainly by how well a person can adapt and manage at every juncture of change. The toil, I reckon, is in one's ability to genuinely let go.

In our society, much is done to prepare and encourage people to bond in general. Be it building good familial relationships or maintaining a robust social circle or working harmoniously among team members. However not nearly as many resources in the community encourage us to learn the unintended gift of letting go in the caregiving journey.



When I reflect then on the caregiving journey, I see and feel that if one were able to let go of expectations of who our loved one was prior to the illness, or to our ideal of the role that person plays, then perhaps we may see our caregiving journey more as one where the scenery is inspiring and breath-taking. Take for example the case when an older parent develops a cognitive condition, such as dementia. If we were able to accept that they are no longer able to play the role of a parent and that we may need to take up some of this role for them instead, then I believe that our acceptance of the new situation would greatly help us adjust positively to the caregiving journey. On the contrary, if I were to hold on to the expectations of what and how they were prior to the onset of the condition, then I may really be setting both them and ourselves up for many bumps on the caregiving journey.



The thin and often fleeting line of “in sync adaptation” is the key, I feel, to enable us to continue to be reminded to let go and embrace what is the ‘new norm’ – a common placed phrase in these Covid-19 days. If we are persistent in our pursuit of this veil of adaptation, the acceptance can enable us to be energised to continue in

this expedition. Not just to continue this exploration, but to be able to do so with awe and joy as constant companions.

At the end of the day, like any journey to faraway lands, when it is all done and dusted, it is the memories of this journey that would continue to inspire, sustain and give us strength for the rest of our own journey.

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