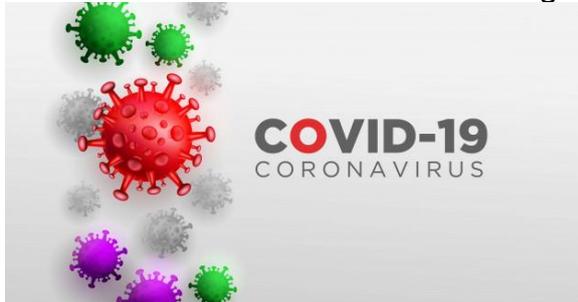


## A lesson in caregiving – by the caregiver

Year 2020, with Covid-19 has been a tough year for many of us.



As care manager looking after the elderly, this is also a time when we observe how individuals – both elderly and their caregivers, of varying age range – learn and adapt to changes. Sure, there are struggles, and many uncomfortable adjustments to be made, while new discovery of coping and appreciation are being explored.

Covid-19 has changed the routine for Mdm Z and her daughter, Ms A. Though they do not stay together, Ms A has been the main pillar of support for Mdm Z, who has cognitive impairment and mood disorders. Though there is a helper employed to look after Mdm Z's daily needs, it was not easy to stabilise Mdm Z as she tends to get restless and moody.



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Mdm Z has been going to a day care service at least twice a week, and she mingled with her neighbours and friends during her daily stroll downstairs her block, before Covid-19 hit the country. Thereafter, the wearing of mask, social distancing, and being cooped up at home (especially during the CB period) presented new challenges to Mdm Z. Her other children and grandchildren were also not allowed to visit during circuit breaker period thus it was a double whammy to her.

The initial phase was tough for Mdm Z who felt bewildered, despite explanation and reminders. Ms A had to crack her head to find ways to stabilise her mother emotionally and to continue engaging her differently to keep her cognitively stimulated. To add on to her woes, the helper's contract ended and a new one had to be found quickly.



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But Ms A never gave up, despite having to manage other commitments. With determination (and lots of patience!), Ms A discovered that Mdm Z is opened to do handicraft work, which helped to keep Mdm Z focused, and she felt good about herself upon finishing the handicraft work. This new discovery led to trials (and errors) in exploring new things such as getting Mdm Z to do daily exercises with the help of the new helper and via Youtube videos. Arrangements were also made to do video call for Mdm Z to 'see' her son and grandchildren 'virtually'. Thus things settled well gradually.



There has been lots of learning (at least for me) from this family throughout this journey. Caregivers are indeed a creative and resourceful group of people. They are also very resilient, having to manage whatever changes that come their way. Besides having lots of patience, the alternative ways we choose to engage the elders play a part in the caregiving experience.

For Ms A, while she gets edgy at times in caring for Mdm Z, she feels appreciative towards her mother who is opened to try and accept new ways of coping. Ms A could see the effort Mdm Z has put in despite her own limitations and that gives her the strength and desire to continue to improve the situation for both of them. Finding the reason and motivation to continue trying is probably as important as doing the task itself - as one may feel a sense of loss while doing multiple tasks. That provides strength and perseverance.



I look forward to more learnings from the caregivers.

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