

Shared Journeys' Reflections

In the late 1970s, both of my parents were diagnosed with cancer within a space of two years and both of them left us months later. Four decades later my father-in-law was diagnosed with dementia, and he too left after a period of time. During these periods, my family and I took turns to take care of them.



Medical science has since advanced significantly. It helped to ease the burden on caregivers especially for those involved in providing palliative care. Nevertheless, the gamut of emotions that exhaust caregivers especially those who are family members, have not diminished. Anxiety and a plethora of worries of the patient's debilitating conditions, frustrations, confusions, the stress of coping with day to day issues, fears of what is going to happen are just a few of the issues that caregivers have to deal with constantly. In spite of technological progress, the emotional support needed by caregivers remains the same, if not more so. Fortunately, there are more organised help in the community palliative care sector now than before. – the caregivers only have to decide on what they need to help them ease their caregiving routines.

With the benefit of hindsight, I realised that a positive approach to the situation was vital. I am



surprised that after a period of time, memories of the trauma of caregiving began to fade while the bittersweet moments of the care giving period remains vivid. The routine of caregiving may be exhausting and depressing but one can sieve through their mind to find bright spots that help to lighten one's caregiving and emotional load. Small blessings, gesture of appreciation, no matter how small or brief from the loved ones and sweet moments of bonding are just some examples. Good memories of

the loved one that one has cared for and gratitude are also good boosters to help to raise the caregiver's spirit. The key resides in the love for the care recipient although this may be submerged by the ever present and more palpable negativity.



Another key point is to live in the present - one moment at a time, one day at a time. Regrets and guilt of what had happened and worries of the future are very heavy drag. As such, taking a break no matter how short and whenever possible can help to recharge one's battery. A caregiver has to keep himself/herself healthy too.

One other aspect is the weight of expectation. Whether it is from others or from oneself, it is helpful for the caregiver not to measure oneself against any kind of expectation. All that is important is that one has tried his or her best.

It is helpful to be aware that life is short. Take a step back, reflect on it and feel the compassion and empathy. Cherish and treasure whatever that is available at the moment. The load will feel lighter then.

After all, life is a shared journey for all.

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