



August, 2014

Two recent articles stood out, and I wanted to share them with you. -- Karen

All Caregivers Have Angry Days



Caregivers all have days where they experience different emotions. Our emotions on any given day can range from happy, sad, compassionate, angry, frustrated, depressed—you name it. We've all had those days. Marlis Powers writes:

“Today I'm having an angry day.

Maybe it's from lack of sleep for the past few nights; perhaps it's just that things build up until I have a day when my anger gets the best of me without any single reason.

Here are the things I'm angry about today:

- I'm angry that this man I love has become so helpless.
- I'm angry that he watches TV until 1:00 a.m. and sleeps most of the day.
- I'm angry that he goes to bed without turning off the TV.
- I'm angry that it's a fight to get him to shower at least once a week.
- I'm angry that he drinks too much, compounding his memory problems.
- I'm angry that he can't remember what I told him five minutes ago.
- I'm angry that he loses things – TV remote, wallet, car keys.
- I'm angry that he forgets he mustn't flush the Wet Ones and plugs up the toilet.
- I'm angry that it takes him 45 minutes to get moving in the morning.
- I'm angry that he is so slow that we are late for everything.
- I'm angry at a society that keeps our bodies alive while our brains turn to mush.
- I'm angry at the researchers who haven't found a way to contain the problem.

The list could go on and on. But most of all, I'm angry at myself for getting short tempered and out of patience with him and everyone else.

I have to remind myself, as Ethel Thayer (Katherine Hepburn) said in the movie On Golden Pond, "He's doing the very best he can." Much as I try to curb my anger and not let it show, I find myself being curt, evasive, snippy and sometimes, just plain nasty when I let the anger take over.

Charlie doesn't deserve that.

Our loved ones with dementia don't deliberately act out or "forget" things on purpose. And until they are in the later stages of dementia, with no control of their thought processes, they regret their actions and inability to cope with life just as much as those around them.

So, I try to remind myself of the things Charlie still does that mean a lot to me.

He still carries out the garbage, fills the humidifier, pumps the gas for the car (when he can remember how to operate the pump), fills the bird feeder and, best of all, he serves as my "watchdog" while I do the driving. He's saved me from a few close calls.

When I get angry I remind myself of the things he can still do and try not to think about the days ahead when things will only get worse.

If you are having an "angry" day, try not to feel guilty; just strive to keep it under control. We all have them; they are a natural part of the caregiving process.

After all – none of us are saints.”



[Marlis Powers](#), Blogger, Marlis describes herself as a “Gramma who loves technology and has a lot to say.” She blogs about whatever catches her interest: food, books, family and more. For AgingCare.com, she writes about the issues facing the elderly and her experiences caring for her husband, Charlie, who suffers from dementia.

Why Caregivers Refuse Help



It's a given that being a caregiver to an ailing spouse, aging parents or other elderly loved one can be exhausting and often isolating.

Caregivers frequently feel stressed and many eventually become burned out—a condition not to be taken lightly. A recent study concluded that caregivers of vulnerable people may die four to eight years earlier than they would have had they not taken on a long-term caregiving role.

Yet many caregivers—even when they have access to safe options for help—still come up with excuses to put off (or actively refuse) assistance. Outsiders may ask, "Why would they do that?" Here are a few reasons I've encountered over the years:

- **The instinct to protect:** While we may come to terms with the fact that we can't make our loved one well, we still want to be the person to provide care and protection. It's a protective instinct that's hard to overcome.
- **Guilt, the caregiver's unwelcome companion:** Sometimes guilt can enter the picture—though it's often not recognized and most of the time is undeserved. We may feel that we could have done something to prevent what has made our loved one so vulnerable. We may feel that our position as a spouse, adult child or even a parent requires us to personally provide all of the care needed. Deserved or not, guilt is nearly always a useless (and sometimes destructive) emotion, yet it's a common problem for caregivers.
- **An unhealthy sense of competition:** We may—especially in the case of adult children caring for their parents—still be trying to earn our place in their hearts as the one who did the most. Sibling rivalry, even in healthy families, seldom completely disappears. Before all of you caregivers who fight to get family help and keep getting denied gang up on me, I want to be clear that I recognize that the bulk of elder care providing, even in large families, frequently falls to one person—most often a daughter. For these people, sibling rivalry isn't the issue. They'd give an arm and a leg to get any help at all from siblings or at least to keep the siblings from criticizing their caregiving methods while offering no constructive assistance. However, there are caregivers who shut out other family members. Most likely, they subconsciously want to be the family hero. I've heard from enough shut-out family members to know that this touchy subject does need to be addressed.
- **Stranger danger:** We don't trust hired caregivers, whether they are providing in-home, assisted living, skilled nursing or any other kind of care. We've heard horror stories and may even personally know people who have had terrible experiences with hired care. This makes us afraid of what may happen if we are not present to monitor our loved one's care at all times.
- **Financial woes:** We fear financial problems. Our medical system still lacks many safety net features such as Medicare or Medicaid coverage to help keep people in their own homes with the assistance of paid help. Medicare and Medicaid proponents want to see this change and there are now some programs in place in some areas where it's possible to get this kind of paid help. The Program of All-inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE) is one such project. Unfortunately, not all states are signed on for this kind of help, and even within states this assistance can be spotty. Meanwhile, whatever assets our parents have must be used for their care. When their money is spent down, they can generally go on Medicaid but this care may not be what we'd have chosen for them.

None of this is smooth, easy or entirely satisfactory, but we have to work with what we have.

How can we change this reluctance to accept help?

- **Seek support and counsel:** We may need counseling from a clergy member or a paid counselor to help us understand that we should not expect ourselves to provide all of the care for an elderly loved one all of the time. It can be destructive for the caregiver and, in the end, negative for the care receiver. Caregivers need to be at least occasionally refreshed in body and mind before they can provide the best ongoing care long-term. A caregiver support group either in person or online (such as the [Caregiver Forum](#) on AgingCare.com) is a good start and something to continue using. If you're stuck, you may want to also seek some professional counseling to help yourself move forward.
- **Make peace with the past, live in the present:** Nothing can undo what is done. That's why ongoing guilt—even if you feel it's earned—is useless. It's better to work positively with what is now reality than to wallow in the past about what might have been. If your spouse ate a diet of sweets while he was diabetic, it is not your fault. You likely made suggestions and helped in any way possible but we can't live other's lives for them. No matter how much you love him, nothing changes that reality.
- **Accept what is:** When siblings won't help, no matter how much you've tried to [convince them that help is needed](#) and wanted, then you have little choice but to become the decision maker. Hiring help may be your only option.
- **Don't fall prey to premature judgments:** While there are many hired caregivers who are simply average, there are also many of them who become incredibly in-tune with their care receivers. Yes, there are horror stories. Do your homework before hiring an outside caregiver or using a facility. Once you've hired some help, make your presence known without acting like you're an adversary. You and the hired caregivers are a team. Eventually, if you've found a good fit, you can relax and enjoy having them take on more of the physical care so that you are free to spend quality time with your loved one.
- **Find ways to maximize monetary resources:** Financial issues will be ongoing until we have programs that can help people no matter where they live. We can and should pressure law makers to do more to help caregivers, but that won't change much for those who are now in the trenches. Seeking help from an elder law attorney can be wise. He or she can go over your loved one's financial situation and guide you on how to move forward.

With or without help, you remain a caregiver.

Even when a loved one is in a nursing home, the primary caregiver still has many responsibilities and is on call 24/7. It can be difficult, but opening up to the possibility of outside help is a good first step towards ensuring that you can have at least some kind of a life apart from the constant needs of your care receiver.

Convincing yourself that your loved one may also benefit from a variety of caregivers could be your biggest challenge.



[Carol Bradley Bursack](#), Expert , over the span of two decades, author, columnist, consultant and speaker Carol Bradley Bursack cared for a neighbor and six elderly family members.



Recipe Corner

Delicious with the fruity tastes and very nutritious. This makes a big bowl, but holds well. Serve chilled on lettuce leaves.

Chicken Salad

- 13 oz. can pineapple tidbits
- 1 ½ cups grapes, seedless and cut in half
- 3 cups cooked rice, cold
- 1 ½ cups sliced celery
- 5 cups cooked chicken, cut into bite-size pieces
- 1 cup mandarin oranges, drained

Combine ingredients and blend with sauce.

Sauce:

- 2 TB salad oil
- 1 tsp. salt
- 2 TB orange juice
- 1 ½ cup mayonnaise
- 2 TB vinegar

JOY-spirations for Caregivers by Annetta Dellinger and Karen Boerger is still a favorite among caregivers that we talk to. Be sure your favorite caregiver has a copy or get one for your church library to share. Order at www.karenboerger.com.



Diabetes and Heat

Because I'm a Type 2 Diabetic myself, I read the latest articles about diabetes. It was interesting to see that heat affects those with Diabetes more and some good tips were given.

- Test more often in the heat because heat affects the absorption rate of your insulin, if you take it.
- Avoid sweet tea and sweetened sodas. Staying well-hydrated is important.
- Protect your meds from high heat. If traveling, keep insulin cool but do not place insulin directly on gel packs or bags of ice.
- Do not leave your meter and test strips in a hot car. Protect from the heat.
- Use air-conditioned buildings for exercise.

Meditation Corner



You Don't Have to Pretend to Be Strong

We all have moments when our trouble feels big and our faith feels so small.

I think of the story in the Gospels when a man who couldn't walk was lowered through the roof by his friends and placed at the feet of Jesus. We all get to the point sometimes when we can't take another step. *There's no shame in that, and you don't have to pretend to be strong.*

Let those who love you carry you. Tell them what you need. Ask for help. *See that as an act of courage—not of weakness.* Because that's what it is.

And your part? Simply being willing to be laid before Jesus. You can come to him with your questions, your fears, your hurts. *He is still there. He still cares. He has not forgotten you.* And he never will.

You don't need to be stronger. You don't need to have more faith. You don't need to pretend everything is okay.

You only need one thing: to be willing to receive.

Jesus can take it from there. He will find a way for you to be carried as far as you need to go. Then he will look at you with eyes of love and heal your heart, your life, in the ways only he can. Be still, friend, and wait. He's even closer than you realize—*he always has been*.

...written by Holley Gerth, 7/2/14