



Loss and Grieving

“It is possible that nobody knows about their situation, or that friends and family simply stay away because they don’t know what to do or how to help.”

ROSALYNN CARTER,

Author of

*Helping Yourself Help Others,
a Book for Caregivers*



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Helping Caregivers
Through
Difficult Times





Helping Caregivers Through Difficult Times

Caregiving is isolating, and its grief is on-going. Each time a loved one becomes more ill, loses abilities, or isn't functioning on the same level as before, the grieving begins anew. The eventual death of the loved one brings a new round of grief that has different qualities because of the finality of the loss and the end of the important role as caregiver. If you want to help a caregiver or former caregiver, here are some suggestions.

- * Ask the caregiver how they are doing. Let them know you recognize that illness and disability are a family affair and that you care about them as individuals.
- * Offer concrete help. Saying “call me, if you need me” isn't beneficial. Making phone calls to locate resources, preparing a meal, providing a respite opportunity, are all valuable services.
- * If you haven't been a caregiver yourself, don't say you know what they are going through. Empathize, by saying, “I can tell you are sad;” don't say you understand.
- * Give the caregiver permission to “take a break” from their caregiving role.

Let them know that no one will think less of them if they take some time for themselves. Let them know they need “refueling time.”

- * Find articles written by other caregivers or written specifically for caregivers. Hearing from others who have “walked in your shoes” can help validate feelings.
- * Reach out to caregivers with a touch, a hug, or other physical expressions of support. Supportive human contact often gets lost in caregiving and during bereavement.
- * When caregiving ends it is normal to feel both grieved and relieved, but caregivers often feel guilty. Let them know there is nothing to feel guilty about. They did their best.

- * Caregivers have no time for themselves. When caregiving ends, time often seems endless. Help grieving caregivers fill their day with meaningful activities. Help them get back into life at a pace that is acceptable to them.

Caregiving and grieving are both hard work. Helping a grieving caregiver to get needed rest is important.

- * Help match a former caregiver with a current caregiver. Former caregivers can help current caregivers by providing support and sharing information gained from the experience. The current caregiver gains a mentor and the former caregiver can use their hard-gained knowledge to help others and find new meaning in life.

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