

The Impact of Caregiving on the Caregiver

“The days were fraught with surprise, heartache, sleepless nights, agonizing decisions, and more than a little family angst.” That statement is from a manuscript my friend Susan allowed me to read, the early stages of a book she’s writing describing her journey with both her parents through the diagnosis and reality of Alzheimer’s.

Her experience is shared by so many, and it doesn’t have to be tied to Alzheimer’s. Anyone who’s caring for or supporting a loved one who’s health is challenged have common threads in their stories.

Susan describes how “Each week brought a series of decisions that needed to be made, tasks that needed to be accomplished, and conversations that needed to be had. Some were relatively straightforward...others I dreaded because of their sensitivity or urgent need of a difficult decision.”

Can you feel the anxiety embedded in her insightful description? Can you grasp the sense of, if not hopelessness at a minimum dread, that this can quickly become more than she may be prepared to handle?

She has had a little distance now since her parents passed, which can allow for new perspectives. But even now she says “Looking back is like trying to focus on the ground when you’re spinning like crazy on a merry go round. So many things needed to be done simultaneously at an impossible pace.”

I am sharing her words of wisdom today because I know so many individuals who are living their version of her story. Some are still in the midst

of the storm, while others are trying to make sense of it all in hindsight. There are no grand words of wisdom that can simplify this part of life. You buckle up, you prepare for a bumpy ride, and you do what has to be done. It’s usually done out of love, sometimes with a touch of obligation mixed in. And hopefully a strong dose of faith in a higher power.

The most important part of Susan’s story is realizing that you are not alone. It can definitely be a lonely road to travel. Even when family members are involved, when others are supporting you in whatever way they can, you are still left with many quiet, introspective and contradicting thoughts. Am I doing the right thing? Have I done enough? Is it ever enough? What will others think of me if I make the wrong decision?

At a certain point in time, we hopefully make a conscious decision to forgive ourselves for our imperfections. We acknowledge that we are human, flawed by our very nature. We put forth our best, and on any given day our best may look different. But each day, we give what we can, sometimes more than we realized we were capable of, and look toward the next day. After all, we still have our own life to live.

Care for those who need you. Give to the best of your ability. But don’t lose yourself in the process.

*This article is a reprint of a blog posted by
Adele Lund, Laureate Group’s Director of
Community and Business Relations*

For over 40 years, Laureate Group, a local, family owned business has been helping older adults and their families manage the challenges of aging. Laureate Group operates eight senior communities throughout the Greater Milwaukee area. Additional resources can be found at:

*www.laureategroup.com/blog • www.laureategroup.com • Laureate Cares: 262-832-7113
Careers for Caring People: www.laureategroup.com/careers*