

Duty Bound

The Pressure of Limitless Caregiving



**Del Mar Caregiver
Resource Center**

Supporting Caregivers through their Journey

“Limitless Caregiving” what comes to mind when you read this statement? Take a moment, reflect on your experience as a caregiver. Write down a few things that come to mind.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

For some, there may be time to plan and prepare to take on caregiving for a loved one. But for many, taking on the role and duties of caring for a loved one with a serious and disabling illness is sudden, leaving no time to plan or prepare. Soon after becoming a caregiver the duties, responsibilities and scope of work become evident. Unless someone walks in your shoes, others may not comprehend the full extent of what caregiving entails.

“Limitless Caregiving” if you were to write down a job description for yourself as a caregiver, what would it include? In addition to daily tasks, what special knowledge and skills have you had to develop? What additional responsibilities have you had to take on?

Take some time right now. Reflect, then write out your caregiving job description. Follow the template below:

My Caregiving Job Description

What is the illness of the person your care for?
How does the illness of the person you care for affect their ability to care for themselves?
What have you had to learn about the person's illness?
What skills have you had to learn?
What tasks do you perform?

At some point in the caregiving journey, responsibilities & duties begin to seem endless...“Limitless”

Balancing Act

Caregiving is a balancing act. When we find ourselves in that “Limitless” zone it becomes important to regain balance in life. What happens when a person loses their physical balance? When off-balance, we attempt to regain balance, or we fall. Limitless caregiving unchecked, increases risk for developing emotional distress and physical illness. For this reason, it is important to pause, like you are now as you read this paper, to reflect and organize your thoughts about your caregiving journey. Once we can clearly see and understand what is in front of us, are able to regain some balance in life.

Establishing balance requires effort and discipline to actualize what you want to be different. For some, they may want to feel more confident in the care of their loved one. For others, they may want a periodic respite break from caregiving. Whatever the need is, matters, and is deserving of being met.

- How are you doing achieving balance in life?
- Balance requires self-care, how are you doing with self-care?
- What does self-care mean to you?
- When you do achieve balance, visualize what will be different?

If achieving balance in life involves self-care, then self-care means setting limits for yourself and/or others. “Easier said than done.” True, but what other choice do we have? The idea of self-care may be viewed negatively. There are many triggers for feeling this way, such as:

- “This is my obligation and duty above all else.”
- “Other family members don’t have a clue or want to be involved.”
- “There is no one else I can rely on.”
- “No one can do this as well as I can.”
- “Self-care is selfish.”
- “I’d feel like a bad person if I took time for myself.”
- “It is best to just accept the way it is and carry on.”

It isn’t uncommon to have such thoughts from time to time. Although there may be some truth within these statements, the reality is, caregivers are human, imperfect and have limits. No one should wrestle with the demands of caregiving alone.

Self-Care

Self-care can be whatever is meaningful for you. Self-care is more than an action or activity. It can simply be time in brief meditation or reciting affirmations. Let self-care be what helps you recharge your battery. Self-care is about being healthy and mentally alert. If the thought

of self-care strikes you as a bit indulgent, reframe that thought, self-care is about preservation.

In conclusion, one more activity: What about you and your life is worth preserving? Reflect, then write it down, that simple, you have begun the process of rebalancing life.

For information about caregiver services & support, call:
Del Mar Caregiver Resource Center | 1-800-624-8304
Or visit: www.delmarcaregiver.org

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