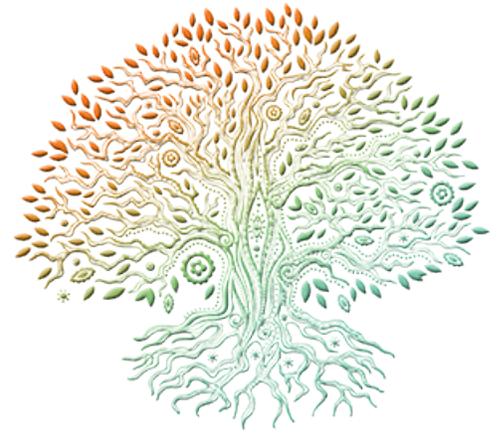




Did you know that . . . *Caregivers come in all ages.*



*Caregivers can be children.*

- ▶ There are children in their 20's who have sole responsibility for the care of a parent. In addition to trying to "launch" themselves in the world they have the full time job of caring for a parent.
- ▶ There are much younger children from grade school to high school who may have a grandparent living in the house with them. The child may be providing supervision for the person with memory impairment when they first come home from school until the child's parent's get home from work.
- ▶ There are teenagers who may have a parent either living in the house with them with Alzheimer's Disease or they may be going to see their dad or mom in a nursing home. Children can be phenomenal in relating to someone with dementia. They can also be a big help to caregivers with day to day things. Children can also have a hard time understanding what is going on and can suffer from stress. This especially true if it is a parent who has the illness.
- ▶ Children need special support in processing what is going on.

*Caregivers can be elderly themselves.*

- ▶ Many caregivers are senior citizens. Some caregivers may be in their 90's and caring for a spouse with dementia.
- ▶ Elderly caregivers are probably dealing with issues related to our own physical decline. We may have bad knees or hips and have a hard time walking. We may have a heart condition. We may be a cancer survivor. We may be diabetic or asthmatic. We may be having a hard time driving ourselves or just not as much energy to do what we used to be able to do.

*Caregivers have all kinds of relationships.*

- ▶ Some caregivers have been married for 50 years to the person with the illness.
- ▶ For some caregivers, this may be a second marriage of only a few years.
- ▶ Some caregivers may be separated from their spouse.
- ▶ Some caregivers may be divorced.
- ▶ Some caregivers may be the girlfriend or boyfriend who lives with the person.
- ▶ Some caregivers may be the girlfriend or boyfriend who lives in their own place.
- ▶ Sometimes, there may be a history of abuse in the relationship.
- ▶ Some caregivers may have been estranged previously from those they now care for.
- ▶ Some caregivers may not be biologically related to the person they are caring for.

*Caregivers may be caring for multiple people.*

- ▶ In addition to caring for our spouse or sibling, we may also be helping with the care of our grandchildren or great grandchildren.
- ▶ Some of us may have adult children with disabilities who are dependent on us for care.
- ▶ Some of us may have adult children who are physically sick and need our help.
- ▶ Some of us may be caring for our parents and our in law.

*Caregivers may have been down this road before.*

- ▶ Many of us have cared for our parents and now we care for our spouse.
- ▶ Some of us have cared for an aunt or uncle and now our own parent has dementia

*Although we may have different situations, we may all share some of the same experiences and feelings.*

- ▶ We may be trying to help someone who doesn't want help.
- ▶ The person we are trying to help may think that there is nothing wrong with them.
- ▶ Other family members may not understand what we are going through.
- ▶ We may be doing lots of things that we never thought we would have to do before. A husband may now be doing the laundry and the cooking. A wife may have to take care of the household repairs and finances. An adult child may be deciding the future for a parent who was always very independent.
- ▶ Although there may be someone in the house with you, you may feel very alone.
- ▶ At times you may feel worried and anxious about what the future hold for you and them.
- ▶ We may get angry at the person, lose our patience and sometimes yell.
- ▶ We may feel "Why me?"
- ▶ We may resent that this has happened. It was not a part of our plan for how things would go.
- ▶ Some of us may not have chosen this role but it was placed on us.
- ▶ Some of us just do what we have to each day to get through.
- ▶ Many of us have a hard time managing our own lives now that we are caregivers. Bills and correspondence are piling up. Our houses may be a mess. Projects are unfinished. We have a hard time taking care of own health issues because we are so busy taking care of our family member.
- ▶ We may at times feel overwhelmed about what to do next and have a hard time figuring out what resources may be available to help me and my loved one.

Do you see yourself somewhere in here? Do you get a sense that there are a lot of people who are walking in your shoes? You may pass strangers on the street and not even realize that they are caregivers, too. You are not alone. There are many of us struggling with the same things that you are. Reading this may help you feel less alone. Talking to others about what you are feeling and going through can be very helpful. Some people may like to talk with others at a support group. Some people prefer to talk one on one. We are here for you. If you would like to talk with us about anything you have read in this article, or anything else, please call. We are here for you.