

Catholic Caregivers

'Caregiving is pro-life!'

'I Don't Want to Be a Burden'

There are reasons a care-receiver is concerned about "being a burden."

We live in a society that sees self-sufficiency as the greatest goal: If you can't take care of yourself, you're not of value. Besides having his or her pride battered by being dependent on you, your loved one also worries about adding to your load. He or she sees the pressure that you're under and so it can seem, from that perspective, that he or she *is* a burden.

Your loved one may say, "I don't want to be burden" when you're feeling angry, upset or frustrated. Typically, your immediate answer is, "You're not!" Typically, your immediate feeling is guilt.

Let your parent or spouse know that providing care is something you want to do.

What can you do? Here are some suggestions for how to handle this situation:

--Admit that what you're doing *is* hard. Remember this situation will not last forever. Fortunately, and unfortunately, it will end.

--Look for outside support. Try to avoid becoming so overloaded that your loved one *does* seem like a burden.

--Realize that your loved one may need to be reassured more than once. Yes, you told him or her last week but you need say it again.

--See if there's some small part of a bigger task your care-receiver can do to feel like he or she is helping out at least a little bit. Better still, see if there is something your loved one can do for you, even if it's a token gesture to say "thanks" -- setting the table or folding the laundry, for example.

--Sit down with your loved one during a calm time and talk about the idea of him or her being a burden. Let your parent or spouse know that providing care is something you *want* to do. Yes, there are hectic moments, but you see taking care of him or her as a privilege. It's a way of saying "I love you" and "Thank you for all you've done." You can also point out that you view your loved one's accepting your help as a gift from him or her to you. □

A Caregiver's Prayer

Heavenly Father, help me better understand and believe I can do what you ask me to do.

Forgive me for the times, even now, when I question your judgment.

As I go about the many daily tasks of caregiving, give me energy.

As I watch my loved one oh-so-slowly walk across the room, give me strength.

As I answer his/her repeated question just one more time, give me patience.

As I look for solutions to whatever is the most recent concern, give me wisdom.

As I reminisce with him/her about the "good old days," give me a moment of laughter.

As I get to know my loved one in a new way, seeing both his/her strength and frailty, give me joy.

As I sit beside my loved one's bed waiting for his/her pain medication to take effect, give me comfort.

Lighten my burden, answer my prayer, and give me the strength to do what so often seems impossible. Give me a quiet place to rest when I need it and a quieting of my anxieties when I'm there.

Change my attitude from a tired, frustrated and angry caregiver to the loving and compassionate one I want to be.

Remain my constant companion as I face the challenges of caregiving and when my job is through and it's time for me to let go, help me remember he/she is leaving my loving arms to enter your eternal embrace. Amen.