

Catholic Caregivers

'Caregiving is pro-life!'

Words That Sting, Words That Comfort

If your loved one is seriously ill, you may soon discover that the reactions of others, and your own emotions, can take surprising twists and turns. It's hard to think about what's happening to your care-receiver; it may be harder to have to say those words out loud. "Mom has had a stroke." "My husband was diagnosed with cancer." "It's at the stage where nothing else can be done." "The doctor said it's only a matter of months . . . of weeks . . . of days."

If your loved one is seriously ill, you'll have to speak about the situation repeatedly. That's when questions from some of your peers may hurt.

If your loved one is seriously ill, you'll have to speak about the situation repeatedly. That's when questions from some of your peers may hurt. "How old is he?" "Did she smoke?" "Had he been sick for a while?" "Did she take good care of herself?" Though it's never explicitly said, the meaning seems clear: Thank God it's your loved one who's sick and not mine. Mine is younger. Mine never smoked. Mine is healthy. Mine exercises and eats right.

These people don't mean to be rude, but sometimes their words sting. Theirs is a natural reaction, not unlike what combat veterans recall feeling when they learned a comrade had been killed in battle. They felt a sense of relief, of gratefulness that—for now, anyway—they had been spared.

When your loved one is ill or dying, some people don't know what to say or are afraid they'll say the "wrong" thing. They don't say anything at all to acknowledge your loved one's illness or death. They try to avoid you

altogether.

Don't be surprised if you feel a strange burst of resentment toward others the same age as your loved one who are still healthy. It's not that you wish them ill. It's not that you wish anyone ill. But why is someone else's loved one doing so well when yours is failing so rapidly? And how can everyone else behave so normally, continue with business as usual, when your dear one is so close to death?

Seek support from peers who know what you're going through. These are people whose loved one has been ill or has died. They've survived those thoughtless, stinging questions. These extended family members, friends and coworkers can offer unmatched compassion. They can share an amazing grace. They clearly know the power of the simple "I'm so sorry to hear that. I'll keep you and your loved one and your family in my prayers."

If you're taking care of your...

- Spouse.
- Aging parent or family member.
- Child or sibling with special needs.

Here's *free* caregiver support.

The **Friends of St. John the Caregiver** is an international Catholic organization addressing the growing needs of family caregivers by providing:

- spirituality, information and resources to individual caregivers
www.YourAgingParent.com
- training and educational material to dioceses and parishes
www.CatholicCaregivers.com
- a membership association* offering spiritual support for those who need care, those who give care and those who assist others giving care
www.FSJC.org

(*No membership dues! No meetings! All we ask is that you pray for family caregivers and those receiving care.)

www.FSJC.org
1-800-392-JOHN (5646)
P.O. Box 320, Mountlake Terrace, WA 98043

Catholic Caregivers is a free monthly publication of CatholicCaregivers.com, a program of the Friends of St. John the Caregiver. Individuals, dioceses, parishes, Knights of Columbus councils, schools and other Catholic organizations are encouraged to make and distribute copies. For more information, go to www.CatholicCaregivers.com. **Vol. 6, No. 2**