



Feelings of Caregivers

No matter how much time you spend caregiving, you may feel like you are not doing enough ... that you can never do enough. I certainly felt like that many times. It was easy to beat myself up when I felt I dropped the ball on caregiving to work or tend to other family matters, but sometimes I just dropped the ball because I was tired of holding the ball!

All kinds of caregiving situations can produce remorse — full-time care in the home or long-distance caregiving if a loved one lives elsewhere. Merriam-Webster dictionary defines remorse as a gnawing distress arising from a sense of guilt for past wrongs; self-reproach. Caregivers can get lost in remorse because caregiving usually combines difficult and complex circumstances with intimate relationships, a combustible combination!

In cases of day-to-day caregiving, you may feel that you are too emotional, or unable to keep up with all the information and treatments that are available. In long-distance caregiving, you may feel torn, like you should *make* more time to be with your loved one, when in reality, there is no time that works out if you want to pay the bills and responsibly handle your own life.

Why do caregivers feel this way? Here are just a few reasons:

- **Isolation** — A caregiver is usually the primary person with the individual he or she cares for and not frequently out socially. Even if a person is a long-distance caregiver, he or she may feel emotionally isolated and trapped in a state of guilt and constant worry.
- **Many caregivers are not trained in caregiving, nursing, or psychology** so they face a long learning curve. If a caregiver happens to be a nurse, doctor, or psychologist, he or she may feel particularly inadequate when treatments or remedies don't work.
- **Caregiving is intimate** — Caregivers often see what the rest of the world does not see and that can create feelings of disconnection. When a loved one is sweet to outsiders but nasty to the caregiver, confusion and resentment can build. Each caregiving situation is vastly different depending upon both the person being cared for and the caregiver. Each has its own set of unspoken rules between the two parties based on past history and personality.

Five ways to banish caregiver remorse:

1. **Give yourself credit** for showing up, for taking responsibility, for being there.
2. **Ask yourself if you would judge someone else** as harshly as you are judging yourself.
3. **Acknowledge all the things you did right.** List them in your mind — remember the smiles you coaxed, the emergencies you handled, the comfort you provided and know that you made a difference to a loved one in need.
4. **If you are currently caregiving, lighten up!** When you make a mistake, turn it into a joke: "It's so kind of you to let me practice on you! Just ten more times and I'll get it right!" Remember, there is a learning curve and not everything you do will be perfect the first time. Laughter is a great diffuser.



5. If the person you cared for is gone, admit your shortcomings in prayer or in writing, offer your heartfelt apology, and **let it go**. If you can't forgive yourself, and this affects the rest of your life, seek counseling.

What feelings of caregiving bother you the most?	How do you deal with these feelings?	Do you need encouragement, forgiveness or respite?

How can your brothers and sisters in Christ pray for you?