



SENIOR ACCESS POINTS
OF LARIMER COUNTY

Caring for the Caregiver

By Suzie Daggett



The momentous task of caring for a loved one is not to be taken lightly. As a caregiver, you are in a position of helping navigate life's mysteries in the medical, social, emotional world. This can take a toll on you. Your loved one is being cared for, but who is caring for you?

At the end of Mom's life, I was caring for and organizing her daily needs. This was a new gig for me and I jumped in with high ignorance believing '*I can do this*'. Soon I was experiencing deep bone exhaustion. I realized I had to take better care of myself. If not, I would be the one needing care. I know from others who have cared for a loved one that self-care is critical. If you are exhausted, you cannot be of service. Wide ranging emotions and stress related issues can tip the scales and soon, you are making mistakes while trying so heroically to care for your loved one.

When I noticed my stress climbing, I had others cover for me while I went for walks, took a nap, went to lunch, anything that did not require thinking or doing for mom. This is not selfish behavior—this is self-care.

If you find yourself weepy, sleepy, unable to focus, more than grumpy, gaining or losing weight, you need a break to continue serving your loved one. This is your body's signal that something needs to change.

To make needed changes, consider this:

- Ask for help. Then be ready to receive what is offered. I gave up control to let others do what they did best.

- Get sleep. Even if it means using a sleeping aid or pill. You need deep sleep so your brain can rest and revitalize.
- Eat good food. Chocolate and wine are wonderful, but so are greens and proteins. Your body needs good nourishment to function well.
- Investigate resources. There are countless resources available for caregivers. Search out organizations offering respite for services. Ask a friend who has gone through the same situation how they coped and who they used.
- Call professionals. Don't rely on neighbors or FB for specific medical needs, use professional real advice.
- This is essential! When under stress, we tend to hold our breath, breathing shallowly. Take long slow breaths in through your nose and exhale out your mouth to bring on a relaxed feeling. Do this often.

Mom's self-care was to die at home with her family around her. That happened. My self-care was to journal daily events to make sense of the situation with mom. She and I made up prayers, laughed, talked and sighed. Mom had little to no regrets in her well-lived life. We spent our last moments loving each other in peace and gratitude. This was the ultimate self-care for us.

Suzie is an award-winning author of *The Pink Door ~ Moms' Journey to the Other Side*, as well as the author of *From Ego to Soul ~ Discover what your Soul needs and what your Ego wants; and PEARLS ~ 52 Contemplative Insights*. Suzie.daggett@gmail.com or www.suziedaggett.com