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A Moment with Madelyn - Survival Tips for Caregivers

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Madelyn Kubin was a Kansas farm woman who overpowered her own failing health to care for her husband after he suffered a debilitating stroke. She chronicled her experience through writing letters to her daughter. The following caregiver survival tip is based on an excerpt from a letter in the book, *Letters from Madelyn, Chronicles of a Caregiver*.

Detach Yourself Mentally by Practicing “Creative Indifference”

Any caregiver will tell you that the physical aspect of the job can be dreary, demanding, and sometimes downright disgusting. But as difficult as that is, it doesn't even begin to compare to the emotional stress. Most caregivers find they must continually cope with feelings of anger, guilt, depression, and grief. It is important to remember that having negative feelings doesn't make you a bad person. At the same time, maintaining a laser-focus on those negative feelings can take a terrible toll on your physical and mental health.

Madelyn wrote about managing her emotions toward her caregiving role after having a conversation with an Episcopal priest who was suffering with terminal cancer. She said:

“We talked about how we had changed because of the illnesses. He said he and his wife have developed a greater sense of humor. They see things funny that I guess most people wouldn't. I told him I had developed a detached attitude. He says he calls it “Creative Indifference” and he has developed it too. I like that better, as “detached” seems cold. Whatever you call it, it means not allowing yourself to become emotionally ravaged by the progression of events.”

The three key steps to developing an “Attitude of Creative Indifference” are:

1. Become AWARE of the specific issues that cause you the greatest amount of emotional stress.
2. ACCEPT the fact that those issues are extremely difficult to manage.
3. ALLOW yourself to take charge of the things you can change and release the things over which you have no power, influence, or control.

Changing your attitude will not change your situation, but it may help you manage it. On days when you can't possibly muster a positive attitude, feeling creatively indifferent can be very empowering.

Elaine K. Sanchez is a Caregiver Survivalist, author, and speaker whose passion is helping people get prepared to take over the care of family elders and cope with the emotional stress of caregiving. Visit her website at www.EKSanchez.com