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A Moment with Madelyn - Survival Tips for Caregivers - Savor Happy Memories

By: Elaine K. Sanchez

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*.

Savor Happy Memories

People who are chronically ill or suffer constant pain can get demanding, cranky, and depressed. Sometimes it can be hard to remember who your loved one was before he or she got sick.

Remembering a happier time helped Madelyn look at her husband a little differently when she wrote:

"I'll never forget Valentine's Day, 1993 when we were in Port Richey, Florida. We were on our way to meet my sister, her husband, and another couple at a very elegant country club.

On the way, we stopped at a grocery store to see if we could find an inexpensive floral gift for Jean and her friend. We were about to give up when the clerk showed us an orchid mounted in a small white wicker basket. We selected two. I must have been looking wistful, because Quentin asked if I would like to have one. I said I sure would!

It was so pretty that I didn't want to mess up the corsage by wearing it, so I kept it in the basket. Our meal was delicious. There was free champagne and a flower for each lady. As we drove around that day I had the most joyous awareness of how much I loved my husband of fifty-one years. The flower lasted three weeks. This is another experience I'll never be able to repeat, but I'm so glad I have the memory."

If you are a caregiver and you are feeling especially angry, frustrated or depressed, think back to a specific happy occasion you shared with your care receiver. Focus on the positive, loving feelings and the joy you experienced as you remember the event. Recapturing the positive feelings associated with that happy memory may ease some of your stress and give you the emotional boost you need to get through a tense moment or even a bad day.

Elaine K. Sanchez is an author and a professional 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.