

Catholic Caregivers

'Caregiving is pro-life!'

Dealing with Caregiver – and Care-receiver – Anger

At times, anger can be a dominant emotion in the caregiver/care-receiver relationship for many reasons. Reasons that would be easier to identify and understand if both people weren't already so drained, both physically and emotionally.

From your loved one's point of view, there have been so many changes and so many losses, his or her life seems out of control.

In the case of an aging parent, for example, Dad can feel angry because he thinks you owe him something in return for all his years of parenting and he may not think he's getting a fair shake.

From your point of view, you're angry at what's happening to your loved one whose health continues to deteriorate. You want to reverse it, or at least stop it, but you can't. You may, at times, want to ignore the whole situation.

Remember your loved one is not necessarily mad at you. You may simply be the target because you're there or because you make her or make him face all those fears head on.

You might be mad at Mom for getting old. Mad at your spouse for fighting you when you try to help. Mad at health-care professionals who may be doing their job all right but don't seem to understand that this is *your* loved one and that makes it different. Mad at your other family members who seem to be doing nothing or doing only the wrong things. And mad at God when you can't see what the point to all this is and you lay the blame on him.

Perhaps, after helping your aging parent, you come home and your spouse and children express resentment that you're spending so much time with Grandma or Grandpa and you just don't have any energy left. You've used up all your patience. At work, at home, and out in public, the slightest problem makes you clench your teeth and seethe.

Identifying why you and your loved one are having these feelings can be an important first step. It may also help you as a caregiver if you:

- Remember your loved one is not necessarily mad at you. You may simply be the target because you're there or because you make her or make him face all those fears head on.
- Try to find some time for yourself. Look for a support group or good friend where you can "dump" some of that anger.
- Forgive yourself.
- Keep in mind that, just as in your other important and central relationships, getting angry with your care-receiver doesn't mean you don't love him or her.
- Go back and apologize. Don't let guilt over that anger eat you up. You can start over again. □

Advice from St. Francis de Sales
(1567-1622, feast day Jan. 24).

"Have patience with all things, but chiefly have patience with yourself.

Do not lose courage in considering your own imperfections, but instantly set about remedying them – every day begin the task anew."

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"Do not look forward to what may happen tomorrow; the same everlasting Father who cares for you today will take care of you tomorrow and every day. Either He will shield you from suffering, or He will give you unfailing strength to bear it. Be at peace, then, put aside all anxious thoughts and imaginations, and say continually:

'The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart has trusted in Him and I am helped. He is not only with me but in me and I in Him.'"

St. John the Caregiver, pray for us!

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You're not alone! Members of the **Friends of St. John the Caregiver** are *praying for you and your loved one every day!* Find out more at www.FSJC.org or P.O. Box 320, Mountlake Terrace, WA 98043.

Spirituality, information and resources for Catholic caregivers are available at www.YourAgingParent.com, a program of the Friends of St. John the Caregiver.
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