

Catholic Caregivers

'Caregiving is pro-life!'

Dealing with Your Parent's Racial and Ethnic Prejudices

It's not uncommon for an aging parent to use a derogatory term to describe someone's race or ethnic background. It's embarrassing to you and disrespectful to the people providing care for your mom or dad. Sometimes the care-receiver isn't deliberately trying to offend anyone, but his or her prejudices stand out more starkly now as society continues to try to move beyond a time of ignorance and hate.

With that in mind, here are some things you can do to help your parent and the person who comes to assist him or her:

--Talk with Dad about the person who is helping him. Emphasize the nurse's, therapist's, or worker's training and experience. If you're bringing in someone to assist with home care, don't just spring that person on your father and hope for the best.

--Remind your parent and the care provider that it may take a lot of patience on both sides. A professional caregiver may speak English as a second language and have a strong accent. It might take your mother a while before she can easily understand what that person is saying.

--Don't let your parent off the hook. Challenge prejudice, especially if your parent slips up when your children are around. Grandparents can have a profound influence on the youngest generation, an influence that can be negative as well as positive. Remember that none of us is ever too old to learn. None of us is ever too old to become a better—a more loving—person.

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For more information, or a free copy of "The Little Book of Caregiver Prayers," write Friends of St. John the Caregiver, P.O. Box 320, Mountlake Terrace, WA 98043; visit www.FSJC.org; or call 1-800-392-JOHN (5646).

A Caregiver's Prayer

Heavenly Father, help me better understand and believe I can do what you ask me to do.

Forgive me for the times, even now, when I question your judgment.

As I go about the many daily tasks of caregiving, give me energy.

As I watch my loved one oh-so-slowly walk across the room, give me strength.

As I answer his/her repeated question just one more time, give me patience.

As I look for solutions to whatever is the most recent concern, give me wisdom.

As I reminisce with him/her about the "good old days," give me a moment of laughter.

As I get to know my loved one in a new way, seeing both his/her strength and frailty, give me joy.

As I sit beside my loved one's bed waiting for his/her pain medication to take effect, give me comfort.

Lighten my burden, answer my prayer, and give me the strength to do what so often seems impossible. Give me a quiet place to rest when I need it and a quieting of my anxieties when I'm there.

Change my attitude from a tired, frustrated and angry caregiver to the loving and compassionate one I want to be.

Remain my constant companion as I face the challenges of caregiving and when my job is through and it's time for me to let go, help me remember he/she is leaving my loving arms to enter your eternal embrace. Amen

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