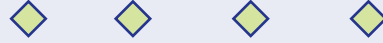




# Women on Wellness



your advocate for good health



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## When you become a care giver

My experience is not in the professional arena of care givers, i.e., a nurse or doctor. Yet I know I am not alone in something that can be life-changing - caring for someone you love when they are diagnosed with an illness.

At 35 years old, I was still Daddy's girl. He was my idol, my protector - at times even my date! We were blessed with that special relationship that only fathers and daughters can have.

When you have a special bond with someone, it's not unusual to contemplate what you would do if something happened to them. My thought was if something ever happened to my Dad, I would sit in a corner, rock back and forth and never snap out of it. But he was invincible - nothing would ever happen to him.

Unfortunately and fortunately, I would learn that I was wrong on both accounts.

He was diagnosed with stage 4 lung cancer - the obvious unfortunate part. The fortunate part was realizing the person you can become when you're needed by someone you love - a care giver.

Most often, you may not want to leave your loved one's side. In the beginning, you have the energy to be there 24-7. Even if they're sleeping, you probably won't go far. But after a few days, weeks, maybe even months things may not only be getting under your skin, but also on the nerves of the loved one you're caring for.

I remember cooking eggs for my dad. Learning to prepare his meals was a big thing for me, being a single girl who did not cook! I was using a non-stick skillet and an aluminum utensil. He said under his breath, "It doesn't take long to ruin a pan, does it?" I was so mad, I was ready to put eggs on the face of this person I loved so much - and I'm sure he was ready to do the same to me!

The point is, a change has taken place in both your lives and it will take time to adjust. It is critical that during this change - from whatever you were before to now being a care giver - you take time for yourself. If you do not, the results may be that your loved one doesn't get the best care you can give and you may fold under the pressure.

During the time of not wanting to leave their side, find something to do that is quiet but still stimulating. You may want to catch up on some reading or do crossword puzzles. I learned how to cross-stitch and it was a great project to have when my dad was watching television or sleeping. It also kept him involved, watching the project from beginning to end.

If you're in charge of the shopping, make the excursion fun. Dad had two stores he shopped and their coupons came in the Monday paper. Together, we had a riot going through the coupons and making a list for each store - even if it was a five cent savings! Again, this kept Dad involved and I had the opportunity to go different places. And take another fifteen minutes to stop in that card shop! You'll give yourself the gift of laughter just reading some of the funny cards.

If Hospice is involved, they have what is called "respite" services, where a professional will care for your loved one while you go out. Physical therapists and nurses will also assist in things like bathing and medication.

You may experience moods and feelings you've never had before. Try to remember that taking care of yourself is necessary for you and your loved one. Depending on your beliefs, you may find this time as a blessing. It may be one of the greatest gifts you give them - and yourself.

## Cupid's bow and arrow



You may think Valentine's Day is just another holiday - a marketing ploy to sell chocolate and cards - but let Cupid hear that and he/she may be shooting the arrow at an area other than your heart!

Cupid, the Roman God of love ... often holding a bow and arrow, observes February 14th in honor of Saint Valentine. A greeting or gift given to anyone on this day, especially a sweetheart, is right there - black and white - in good ole *Webster's*.

Not that any of us live by the dictionary as a set of rules, but what's nicer than an opportunity to let someone know you care? How often do you find yourself saying, "I should call that person or write them a letter," and then that busy thing called life gets you side-tracked?

Think about using this tradition of Valentine's Day and let the special people in your life know you care. Here are some unique and easy ideas.

- ☞ The saying "a picture is worth a thousand words" is true. Put on your best smile and mail a photo with "I love you" written on it.
- ☞ Call someone and play a beautiful song before you even say hello. If they hang up, it will be a good laugh when you call them back!
- ☞ Cut out a paper heart and put a short note on it. Then leave it in a drawer or lunch box so it's a surprise when the person finds it.
- ☞ Chocolates, cards and/or flowers always work - but add one of the above to the giving and it will add that unique love that is only yours to give!