

1 TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

Caring for friends or family members who are ill, helpless, fragile, or frightened, can be exhausting physically, emotionally and spiritually. That's why it's essential to take care of yourself first, so that you're able to care for others out of your overflow. One way to take care of yourself is to come to Friends In Deed for support.

2 FOCUS ON CARE NOT CURE

As a caregiver, it's important to recognize the distinction between healing and curing. In the simplest terms, curing is changing what is (i.e. the elimination of a disease) while healing implies the ability to relate differently to things as they are. Your role as a caregiver is to deal with things as they are and be clear about the task at hand.

3 WORK TO BE IN THE MOMENT

Getting caught in what's happened in the past, or what you imagine will happen in the future, robs you of the resources you need for the present moment of action. In addition, with some caregiving situations, you may be faced with fearful circumstances. The person for whom you're caring may already be dealing with his or her own fear. You don't want to add your anxiety to the mix. Staying in the present moment is a great way to help tame your fears.

SIX SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLES OF CAREGIVING

4 EXPRESS YOUR FEELINGS APPROPRIATELY

As a caregiver, you may find people behaving in ways that are difficult to handle. Remember, usually the circumstances of the illness are creating the behavior. Your job is to not take it personally. However, if you're in a situation where you're compelled to express your feelings, be sure to say how you feel without making the person you're caring for "wrong." The best way to do this is with "I" messages, not "You" messages. (i.e. "I get the feeling that..." instead of "You make me feel...")

5 SEEK TO FIND MEANING IN THE EXPERIENCE

Even in the most difficult and challenging situations you can find meaning, value and purpose. You can always see that the roles could be reversed and imagine how you would like to be treated. One of the things you'll discover, as a caregiver, is that the quality of life is not determined by the circumstances but how you and the person for whom you care perceive the circumstances.

6 UNDERSTAND THAT NOTHING IS GOING WRONG

Given our culture, this is the toughest principle to understand. It's easy to get caught in "if only she had taken the test sooner..." or "the doctor should have..." or "why didn't he..." These are very human reactions to frustrating and sad circumstances. Spiritually speaking everything is unfolding exactly as it must at all times. We don't know how the story is supposed to go. We reduce suffering all around if we can be with what is -- without judgment. There is real power in not having to fix or change anything.



Founded in 1991, Friends In Deed -- The Crisis Center for Life-Threatening Illness -- provides emotional and spiritual support for anyone diagnosed with HIV/AIDS, cancer and other life-threatening physical illnesses... as well as support for the caregivers, family and friends of those who are ill... and anyone dealing with grief and bereavement. Check our website or call for more information. All services are **free of charge**.



The Crisis Center for Life-Threatening Illness™

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