



Caring for the Caregiver

Nearly everyone reading this magazine knows someone who has been a caregiver in his/her lifetime or is currently a caregiver. This caregiver could be caring for a sick or disabled spouse, an elderly parent or even an adult child. The constant demands of caregiving can wear on the caregiver both physically and emotionally when one doesn't see the light at the end of the tunnel. Although caregiving can last a few short months, several years or a lifetime, there is a common bond that all caregivers possess. In 1994, the National Family Caregivers Association (NFCA) conducted its first caregiver survey to determine the link between all caregivers. This common bond is its emotional impact.

The common bonds of caregiving are:

- Intense sadness and pain
- Longing for the miracle of normalcy
- Frustration as a result of changing family dynamics
- Isolation which comes from living outside the norm
- Disappointment over the lack of understanding of non-caregivers
- Stress over the increased and enormous responsibilities
- Depression over all the losses sustained

by caregiving

- Fortitude and power to go on and make a difference
- Strength in the knowledge we can survive
- Resourcefulness in our problem solving abilities*

These vacillating emotions are frequently present as I have visited with many caregivers who know all too well the emotions listed above. Knowing that we are not alone in this "emotional time" can be so reassuring. There are many resources in the community to assist the caregiver to maintain "balance" in the middle of this season of life. Support groups are one such resource that offer a wealth of ideas/suggestions/support to the caregiver. Some of the support groups in the metro Jackson area are:

- Broadmoor Baptist Church, 1st Monday at 6:00 p.m. (601-898-2345)
- First Baptist Church Jackson, 3rd Monday at 11:30 a.m. (601-949-1949)
- Colonial Heights Baptist Church, Wednesdays at 6:00 p.m. (601-956-5000)
- University Medical Center, 3rd Monday at 5:30 p.m. (601-815-2800)
- Baptist Adult Day Health Service, 3rd Tuesday at 11:00 a.m. (601-926-1222)

Another upcoming opportunity for education and support is a free Caregiver Conference titled "In the Desert, But Not Alone" that is co-sponsored by Baptist Adult Day Health Service and Summit Counseling, First Baptist Church on November 6 (9:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m.). This annual conference is designed to provide constructive ways to deal with the 24/7 demands of caregiving. Molly Meeks and Andy Wimberly will be the featured

presenters. (To register for this program call 601-948-6262.) If you are a caregiver, **take time to care for you!** ∞

*These stats were obtained from the web site www.thefamilycaregiver.org.

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