

# **WISDOM FOR THE CAREGIVER**

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## ***When Caring for a Person In a Nursing Home***

**Remember** The person living in a nursing home is first of all a real person. Treat the person the way you would like to be treated.

### ***Wisdom for the Caregiver from Ruby***

- Do not “talk down” to older people or treat them like children. Please **show respect** for each person. I need extra help, but that does not mean that I am mentally slow. I have lived and learned for ninety years. I have opinions, likes and dislikes. I am a person.
- Remember that **my room is my home**. Please do not come into my small home and start cleaning and organizing. You are a guest.

### ***Wisdom for the Caregiver from her daughters and others***

- When you approach the nursing home, remind yourself that there is nothing **more important** for you to be doing right now. Try not to be in a rush. The person will sense immediately if you are anxious to “get this visit over with.” Remembering the message of Matthew 25 helped me.
- Remember the power of the **human touch**. Hug, kiss, rub or pat the person’s back, massage her/his hands with lotion, hold his hand. Touch often communicates more than words. Even individuals suffering from dementia feel and know the message communicated by a loving touch.
- A one-minute **phone call** can bring unbelievable joy to a person who does a lot of sitting and has to cope with a lot of silence and loneliness.
- Individuals look forward to **mail** delivery time—**send a card** or note often.

- Try to **imagine** what it would be like to be in a person's situation. What would you miss? What would you want a caregiver to do? Imagine—then do it.
- When the person is sad, **ask what things used to bring them joy**. Their answer may give the caregiver some ideas about activities they could do together or provide topics of conversations.
- As a caregiver **you are not there to fix the situation**. You can't. Caregivers ask, "What should I do when the person cries or is sad all the time?" You are doing what you can by *being there*. Hold the person's hand. Cry with her or him. Say what's in your heart: "I'm so sorry that you feel so sad. It makes me sad too." Or "Oh, how I wish that you could be in your own home."
- Mom enjoyed **giving**. Before holidays we would purchase a variety of treats, and together we would assemble attractive bags of goodies that she gave to aides, nurses and visitors.
- **Conversational starters:** For topics, see "Telling Life's Story" in *The Compassionate Congregation*, pages 34-37, or purchase the book, *The Story of A Lifetime* by Pamela and Stephen Pavuk or find other such books in bookstores. Center on a few questions each time you visit. Record the answers on paper or a recording device. Eventually you can duplicate and share the stories and memories will friends and family members.
- One of the most **important issues** for older people is wondering, "Did my life make a difference?" In preparing for one of mom's birthday parties, we asked all the members of the family to write her a letter sharing a special memory and describing what they especially admired or liked about her. We saved these letters in a photography book filled with pictures of her life. During the last year of mom's life we often opened the memory book. She loved to look at pictures of her family and became absorbed in the world of remembering special times, places, and people. During the last weeks of her life we read the tributes to her. Even though she could no longer communicate much, she would smile and had the most heavenly shine on her face.
- We made a wall of family pictures in my mom's room. It included lots of her memories and trips. The pictures not only brought her pleasure, but it gave her a chance to "show off" her family to staff and visitors. It also offered visitors conversational starters as they asked about the who, when and where of the various pictures. Cindi

- Music can soothe the soul and bring peace and joy. **Bring a CD player** with a **few CDs** and request that aides turn on the music in the person's room instead of the TV—unless the person wants to watch TV. Susan
- To give pleasure to my mom's **sense of touch**, I found a stuffed pretty angel which was covered with various types of materials. Not only was she pretty to look at and reminded my mom that she wasn't alone, but it hung on her bed in a position where she could touch it and hold it if she wished. (Marge)
- **Ask** if the person would like you to say a **prayer** for him/her. Also, inquire, if they would like to pray. (Depending on the person and situation, you might also ask him or her to pray during the week for concerns in your life or in the life of your church. Older people need to be needed.)

*For additional wisdom: see pages 71-76 and pages 28-37 in  
**The Compassionate Congregation** available through Amazon.com  
or via our website at **[www.WisdomoftheWounded.com](http://www.WisdomoftheWounded.com)***