

Valuable Lessons for Caregivers

It's likely many of you have heard about the book written by former Governor Martin Schreiber, "My Two Elaines". It's based upon the journey he and his wife Elaine have been on since her diagnosis of Alzheimers. He wrote the book with an intent of helping others to learn from the mistakes he's made. I've had the privilege of collaborating with Marty on some of his public presentations, and wanted to share a few of my most valued lessons from him.

Therapeutic Fibbing

It's human nature to want to correct someone when they get a fact wrong. So when our loved one with memory loss says it's Tuesday and it's really Friday, we point out their error because we want to help them get it right. Or when they ask where their parent is and they've passed, we may gently explain they died some years ago.

Governor Schreiber explains that therapeutic fibbing is the loving act of telling a fib when the truth is either not important enough to correct them, or when the truth may be painful and impossible for them to process. I'm a strong believer in truth, but understand the value of a fib being a kinder and more productive response in certain circumstances.

Guilt – Get Rid of It

No matter how committed a caregiver you are, or how hard you try to do the right thing, someone may still question the wisdom of your decisions. Unfortunately, unless they've traveled in your 24/7 shoes as the caregiver they can't understand why you make the decisions you do. They can't understand that even when you get a brief break from your caregiver role, the ultimate responsibility never allows for real respite from it.

Guilt is an emotion that can eat away at our energy, can rob us of sleep, and taint the relationship with

our care recipient. If you can recognize your guilt, and track it to its source, you have a greater chance of being able to set it aside. As a caregiver you need every ounce of energy, patience and persistence you can muster. The more you waste on guilt, the less you have for your loved one.

“Putting” Someone in a Care Community

Governor Schreiber talks about feeling the need to continue to care for Elaine by himself, saying he didn't want to “put” her in a care community. But there came a time when he had to admit to himself that he could no longer do it alone. He began to experience his own health problems, and through professional guidance came to realize that allowing Elaine to move to a care community was actually a good thing. He realized that a team of professionals could better serve her growing needs than he alone could. It also allowed him to be more rested, and more fully present when he did spend time with her.

If you haven't had a chance to read “My Two Elaines”, I encourage you to do so. It's an honest expression of his caregiver journey, and may leave you with insights into your own experience. As Marty says, there are always at least two patients, the caregiver and the care recipient. Make sure you're taking care of BOTH patients.

*This article is a reprint of a blog posted by
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Community and Business Relations*

Thank you to those who have been a part of my monthly articles. In keeping with the spirit of Thanksgiving, I'd like to offer you a complimentary copy of My Two Elaines (available thru 12/31/17). Simply call me at 414-659-2343, or email me at adele.lund@laureategroup.com. I hope you find Governor Schreiber's words as insightful as I have.

*For over 40 years, Laureate Group, a local, family owned business has been helping older adults and their families manage the challenges of aging. Laureate Group operates eight senior communities throughout the Greater Milwaukee area. Additional resources can be found at:
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