



Tuality Healthcare
Building a healthier community.
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mental health

Dealing with Your Own Feelings

No matter how much we love our aging relatives, we may at times experience feelings of anger or resentment toward them. Since they need our love and support most during this period of life, it is essential that we recognize the sources of these feelings so that we can successfully deal with them.

Helplessness

Perhaps one of the greatest causes of anger is the anguish and helplessness we feel as we watch a loved one grow frail. We are reminded that their time with us is limited.

Dependency

Dependency is a trait that we identify with children and that we may find unacceptable in an adult. Thus, we may become angry when a person upon whom we have previously depended turns to us for help or fails to do so when it is appropriate.

Harassing Behavior

Often when older people repeat questions we have answered over and over, misplace items, or deny having done something that has obviously been done we may feel that they are deliberately trying to harass us. We must frequently remind ourselves that such behavior is not a personal attack, a lie or belligerence but rather that their forgetfulness is a symptom of mental impairment.

Fear of Aging

Another source of anger is fear of our own aging. We do not like to be reminded that we will all undergo the same changes someday.

Guilt

Feeling guilty can make us angry with ourselves. Perhaps we feel guilty because we think we may not have been understanding or sympathetic enough or because we have had to place an aging and loved relative in a nursing home. Deciding whether or not to

place a relative in a nursing home has made better enemies of more brothers and sisters than the reading of a will. Previously devoted families split down the middle over the "callousness" of those wanting to place the older person in an institution (usually those with whom the person lives) and those who, not confronted with the day-to-day problems, refuse to or cannot understand the need for such a drastic move.

The tension created within the family can be particularly distressing to the older person and may, in the long run, cause him more harm and grief than the decision itself. These problems can be minimized or avoided altogether if families are aware of the likelihood of their occurrence, and if they can remain sensitive, understanding and supportive of each other. Sharing the care of the older person when possible, frequent communication, and progress reports to each other may reduce tension. Knowing that the older person has been consulted and, if possible, has made the final decision to enter a nursing home is a great healer of potential family rifts.

Understanding

These kinds of feelings are common to all of us. Understanding and accepting them as normal help us to be more comfortable with ourselves. This comfort, in turn, will promote a better relationship with or aging relative.