

Your Parent has Memory Loss: Are your Expectations Realistic?

My mother has some memory loss. Though it's hard to admit, I know she's no longer safe on her own. Whether I hire someone to come in to help her or consider making a move, I want her to be a part of the decision. But she's not willing to talk about it. I'm not sure what more I can do.

I wish I could say this was a conversation I rarely have. Unfortunately I have it often with someone struggling to do the right thing for their loved one. And here's the disconnect that so often occurs...

As the child of an older adult we want to care for them to the best of our ability, but we also want to honor them in the process. Our intent is to treat them with dignity and respect, to return the love they've given to us for so many years by doing the right thing, which ultimately means making them happy and not getting angry in the process. But we find ourselves in a situation that makes it virtually impossible to follow the rules of a "good child" as we've known them all our life.

When you were young you knew mom and dad were happy with you because they reacted in a way that showed it. You had been a "good child". But you also knew when you were in trouble and when you'd been a "bad child", when you made them mad or sad. Now forward 40 or 50 years. You know your parent's quality of life is diminishing, and you know they're at risk. Yet when you talk with them about the possibility of getting help or addressing their declining health challenges they get angry, or sad, or silent. When that happens, I believe you just became twelve again and revisit the same feelings you had when you were a "bad child" all those years ago. But here's the problem, you are not twelve today, and your loved one may no longer be able to

make the same competent, logical decisions they could in their younger years. They now have a medical condition that has robbed them of the ability to process things in the same manner as they used to. Yet with the best of intentions here we are waiting for them to see the light, to grasp the logic and know that we are doing what's best for them. IT'S NOT GOING TO HAPPEN BECAUSE THEY ARE NO LONGER CAPABLE OF DOING SO. HOW FAIR IS IT TO EXPECT THEM TO?

At some point you have to realize that the best way to honor them is to do what's right, make the tough decision, and love them enough to allow them to be mad at you. They'll be angry for a while because you made the decision they were no longer capable of making, and in their own way they know that even if they can't or won't express it. That's not easy, but then a lot of things in life aren't. What's even harder is not making the decision, only to have a greater crisis occur later. The old quote "aging isn't for sissies" is so true. But being the child who's trying to do the right thing for their loved one isn't a cake walk either. That's why finding the right professional to help you determine your options and guide you through the process is so important.

Need to talk to someone? Call our Laureate Cares free help line at 262-832-7113. It's a free service where anyone can call to ask questions, investigate options, and have a professional listen to their story and help them find the best solution for their situation. No sales pitch. We simply offer an understanding ear and a few answers to your questions.

*This article is a reprint of a blog posted by
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