The TEN COMMANDMENTS of Caregiving

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COMMANDMENT I: TAKE THE OXYGEN FIRST

Caregiving is an experience of confusion, challenge and mixed emotions. Love for your family member and the satisfaction you derive from helping may create a situation where one sacrifices their lives at the “alter of caregiving.”

It is imperative as a caregiver to take care of one’s own mind, body and soul by taking the oxygen first.
COMMANDMENT II: NEVER ASSUME

How often do we assume that our loved one knows what we know, or knows what we need or desire to have happen, when if fact we are not all psychic?

The result of this is often misplaced anger or resentment. Let’s make a sincere effort to garner all the details before we make assumptions.
COMMANDMENT III: HAVE ONGOING FAMILY CONFERENCES

Roles and responsibilities are extremely important to explain to all involved.

Family conferences are like tuneups used to maintain the family car. Schedule these conferences regularly, before the wheels fall off.
COMMANDMENT IV: DO NOT ISOLATE

Isolation is dangerous because it cuts off family members from outside help and support they need to cope with the stresses of caregiving.

Join a Caregiver Support Group today.
Taking things personally is about self-importance, “the maximum expression of selfishness,” where we assume everything is about “me.”

As a famous author once said, “Nothing other people do is because of you. It is because of themselves.” The actual words said by your loved one are not what is hurting you; it is that you have wounds that are touched by what was said.
COMMANDMENT VI: PLAN AHEAD/HAVE CONTINGENCY PLANS

Turn to other people for help - your family, friends, and neighbors. Prepare clear written list of tasks for anyone who may offer assistance.

Planning ahead is vital as it gets all on the same page, allows your loved one to feel safe and to have continuity, lessening their anxiety. What if I go before my loved one does? The answer is plan ahead!
Commandment VII: Do Not Fall Prey to Shame & Stigma

Shame and stigma have tragic consequences. Caregivers with mental health challenges fail to see help for themselves because of the shame associated with their condition.

Often shame and stigma prevent vital access to in-depth evaluation of those on the caregiving path. There is no biochemical difference between a disease of the brain and a disease of the heart.
A full complement of support services that address the caregiver and the recently diagnosed exists in every community.

Supportive services may include medical, behavioral, legal, dental and various psycho-educational support groups. Investigate community resources that might be helpful. If there is a Leeza’s Place in your community, consult a Leeza Care Advocate or attend meetings and ask other caregivers for the resources that have helped them. If there is not a Leeza’s Place in your community try our Caregiver Connection Line.
COMMANDMENT IX:
HONOR SACRED MEMORIES

Empower yourself and your family using experiential approaches to memories. Take time to “remember.” Get away from it all while relaxing with yourself and your loved ones.

This is a great time to bring children into the process of honoring their elders and allows loved ones to connect in a valuable way. Keeping what emerges out of such a dynamic process is a great way to honor sacred memories and bridge the generations.
Humor therapy is valuable and it helps us through difficult or stressful times.

Try to see the humor in being a caregiver. Try writing on a card “Have you laughed with your loved one today?” and placing it in a conspicuous place in the bathroom or kitchen. Read funny books or jokes, listen to funny tapes or watch humorous movies or videos that make you laugh. Try it and you’ll like it!
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