

Michele's 7-Steps to Approaching Caregiving

Step #1: Am I called to be the caregiver for this person, and, if so, in what capacity?

- Caregiving is something I do; it isn't who I am. It doesn't define me. My identity lies elsewhere.
- What else am I called to or am responsible for?
 - List these out
 - What is the order of these responsibilities? What is my purpose and meaning?
- To what capacity am I called to be the caregiver for this person?
 - Ask, Am I accepting this role out of guilt or because it's being forced upon me? Or do I genuinely feel the calling to provide the care?
 - What elements of caregiving are included in my role as caregiver?
 - How much time can I devote?
 - How much money can I give?
 - How much physical exertion can I contribute?
 - How much emotional burden can I carry?
- Where does caregiving fit in with my other responsibilities?
- Am I prepared for this to change in the future?

Step #2: Define and follow the basics for my own health.

- Each person is called to be a good steward of their body, health, and wellness.
- Some of these basic responsibilities: (If not doing these things on a regular basis, then reevaluate Step 1)
 - Time for Health and Wellness – 11 Areas of Lifestyle
 - Nutrition, sleep, physical activity, hydration, toxicity, cognitive engagement, social connection, spiritual investment, weight management, coping, preventative care
 - Time to pray, meditate, worship, and give thanks
 - Time for rest and recovery
 - Time to commune with others

Step #3: Accept the role I've been assigned (no more, no less), and define the gaps.

- Accept the elements of caregiving that I've been called to.
 - My loved one's needs, while important, are not permitted to undermine my health and wellness responsibilities.
 - Because I have now accepted the role, it doesn't control me – I control this role and have a responsibility to approach it with self-control and obedience. I am not at the mercy of it - I define it.
- Mark the date/time I make the decision and what that decision is.
- Determine plans to fill the gaps (with loved one and family/friends if able), including a timetable to pulling in further assistance as needed (as my loved one declines or if I need more help, etc.).
 - Proactively address potential issues common to caregivers: stress = exercise plan; anxiety/depression = share burdens in a support group, attending church, etc.

Step #4: Write and sign the contract.

- I have now accepted the role. I am not at the mercy of it, because I have defined it, so I control it, and I have a responsibility to approach it with self-control, discipline, calm, and obedience.
 - I am not swayed by emotions or guilt. I cannot be pressured into giving more by other family members, friends, or the one I'm caring for, it causes me to step outside of my other responsibilities the Lord has assigned to me.
- I don't owe my loved one anything and my loved one doesn't owe me. We do and live out of love.

Step #5: Communicate

- Communicate with family, friends, and the one being cared for (when appropriate): “This is the amount I am able to give and we will work to fill in any gaps between that and our loved one’s needs.”
- Remember, other family member’s acceptance to my contract is not a criterion for it being valid. I am the one who went through steps 1-4, not them.
 - I must advocate for my own health and wellness, which is a responsibility assigned to me by my creator. This is part of my societal responsibility as well.

Step #6: Fill the Gaps

- Pull in and assign tasks to family members, friends, and the one being cared for, when able.
- Get legal paperwork done: MPOA, POA, advanced directives, DNR, OOH-DNR, HIPAA forms, etc.
 - Seek estate attorney for guidance (they are most current on laws, which change yearly).
Estate attorney does not help with DNR, or OOH-DNR forms
- Visit with a financial advisor, if possible, regarding financial situation of loved one. It’s the loved one’s financial situation that determines what he/she qualifies for regarding assistance, etc.
- Hire help where needed using Home Care agencies, Care.com, or the local Area Agency on Aging.
- What is my Plan B. If something happens to me, how will my loved one be cared for?

Step #7: Seek support & re-evaluate the list often.

- Support Group is a must. Seek resources to learn more about loved one’s condition(s).
- Re-evaluate steps 1-6 often
 - Have I pulled away from my other responsibilities? Am I neglecting my own health?
 - Have circumstances changed and does my caregiving role need re-defining?
- If not doing these things on a regular basis, then I’m living outside of good stewardship and my basic responsibilities and need to reevaluate elements of my caregiving role in step one.

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