

Overview – Supporting you to Care

I always remember one statement, and that's when the doctor used to come in and ask me a very simple question: "What are you doing tonight?" In hindsight, I thought, "Are you crazy? You know what I'm doing tonight, because what I'm doing tonight, I'm doing 24/7", and I fell into his trap because what he said to me, "I'm a professional person and I don't do 24/7, so why are you doing it? You can't do it because you will need to be there some other day". So, he gave me a great tip, and that is: you are the main carer, and if there's family, subject to the family being able to cope, have them come in and do bits and pieces for yourself.

I think probably one of the hardest things of caring for somebody is you have no control, and taking offers of help from wherever you can get it, you know, whether it's the next-door neighbour, whether it's granny and granddad, whether it's friends, or other support services that are out there, it's really important to just take that time out for yourself.

My relaxation was go for a walk, get out of the house for a couple of hours, be available if you're required, and that proved to me to be my way of managing the whole process.

My escapism was reading. I could lose myself in a book. I liked a good thriller, a good crime story, but for a long time, whenever Colin was ill, I read silly romance books because you didn't have to think about them.

Even, at times, allow them time out, so please don't even look into their face all the time and go, "Are you okay? Are you okay?" Of course they're not okay! Allow the person time on their own, because you have no idea the pain, whatever they're going through. They need time out.

You can end up with conflict within a family. You have got family members who don't want to know. So, even though it's difficult for you, you may want to shake them and say, "Wake up and see what's happening here!" and that conflict, use the other side of your brain and go, "This person is actually...they just cannot face life without them", and maybe that's a better way of looking at it.

Your frustration is natural, so don't think that you're weak, you're letting yourself down. That's a natural thing. Nobody can carry all the unknown in their head. Don't feel bad that you are getting frustrated, because you will be frustrated, believe me, you will be frustrated: number one, you're trying your best to do your best; number two, you're not a professional person; and number three, you're wanting to help the person that you've committed to the rest of your life. The worst case scenario would be two people being ill as a result of an illness, and that's why I say please step out when you're becoming frustrated.

You need to that time for reflection as well because life has changed, no matter what. You just can't go on as before, and you have to go with the change.