

Caregiving without love makes for rocky road

by Marsha Kay Seff

I received a phone call the other day that was both enlightening and disturbing. A 60-plus reader wanted advice about caring for her older brother with myriad health problems. He lives out of town and his sister wanted to know whether she should move him closer in order to care for him. If she did, she wanted to know how to make the chore easiest on herself.

She explained that she doesn't particularly like her brother and that caring for him would be a burden that would adversely affect her comfortable lifestyle.

I felt bad for both of them. How sad not to love or like your brother when you're both adults and should have outgrown sibling rivalries. How sad not to want to help.

This said, I advised the sister to find professional care for her brother close to where he's living now. I figured that her resentment in having to care for him would not only make her miserable, but him as well.

We caregivers know that caregiving isn't easy, and there's little to do to lighten the load. It's natural to feel ambivalent about all the responsibilities. It's normal to have mixed emotions.

We do it because we love our family member and/or because it's the right thing to do. Along the way, we discover there are plenty of rewards, not the least of which is becoming stronger human beings while appreciating the impact we can have on another's life.

And who knows, maybe someday when we need help, a family member or a dear friend will step in to help make our last phase of life as happy and comfortable as possible. My dad always told me what goes around comes around. Wouldn't that be nice?

RETIREMENT EXPECTATIONS

According to a recent survey, some of today's workers might have unrealistic expectations about how long they will continue to work. While the average worker expects to retire at age 65, the average retiree today stopped working at 62, according to the 16th annual Retirement Confidence Survey by the Employee Benefits Research Institute. And while two-thirds of today's workers indicate they expect work in retirement, only 27 percent of current retirees say they've worked any time during their retirement.

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