Rewards of Caregiving

Being a caregiver can be challenging and stressful. But caregivers also describe their role as very meaningful. Here are a few of the many rewards that you may experience when caring for a loved one.

**You may gain new skills.**
- You may learn to be more organized and to plan ahead.
- You may learn to speak your concerns and needs more clearly.
- You may discover strengths and skills you did not know you had.

**You may develop new and lasting friendships.**
- You accomplish more and feel less alone when you connect with others who face the same challenges.
- Caregivers benefit by sharing their concerns, information and solutions with others.
- To find caregiver support groups, call your local social service, senior citizen agencies or faith community. Join or create an online support or discussion group.

**You may learn to find joy in small pleasures.**
- Sharing meals, walks or sunsets can give you precious time for talking, laughing and getting to know more about each other.
- You have the chance to build memories that will last a lifetime.

**Caregiving offers you a chance to give back to someone important in your life.**
- Caring for others:
  - Can renew or heal your relationship with the person.
  - Can boost your own spirits.
  - Can help family members bond as they share caregiving tasks.
  - Is a value we can model for others, including our children.
You can learn about yourself and your limits.

✔ You cannot do everything for another person. But you can learn to ask others for help.
✔ Family, friends, neighbors, volunteers and professional caregivers can help with caregiving tasks such as:
  - Dressing, transportation, feeding, medical or personal care.
  - Grocery shopping, housework and meal preparation.
  - Providing you respite, or time off.
✔ Senior centers and adult day centers can offer daytime respite.
✔ Some assisted living and nursing facilities offer short-term overnight stays to give caregivers a break.

You can learn about taking care of yourself too.

✔ Taking care of your needs is an important aspect of caring for another. Your ability to give care is only as good as your health allows.
✔ Make sure you are eating well, getting enough rest, physical activity, and emotional support.
✔ See your health care provider regularly.
✔ Arrange for respite so that you can stay healthy too.

Caregiving is an opportunity.

✔ To say:
  - Thank you.
  - You are valuable to me.
  - I love you.
  - I care about you.
  - I will be here for you.
✔ To help someone as you would wish to be helped.
✔ To be useful and appreciated.
✔ To help maximize the person’s independence and dignity.
✔ To be there as a caring companion.

To find information about support groups and services in your area, consult your local phone book or search online. You can also call the Eldercare Locator at 1-800-677-1116, or visit its website at www.eldercare.gov on the Internet.