



Special Issue

## What I Learned as a Caregiver: Part 3

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### What I learned as a Caregiver: Enlist help

“The only mistake you can make is not asking for help.” - Sandeep Jauhar

In November 2003, my mother was diagnosed with Idiopathic Pulmonary Fibrosis. Within a few days, my job title changed from daughter/wife/mother - to daughter/wife/mother and caregiver. It has been a journey with ups and downs, but I fall asleep each night having learned that love can go much further than I ever imagined.

Last time I wrote to you all about the importance of taking care of yourself. I hope that you have found ways to implement small changes that help to improve the balance of caring for yourself and caring for your loved one. I encourage you to continue to seek out ways to better your personal mental and physical health along the caregiving journey.

Beyond making time for yourself, it is just as important to resist the temptation to try and do it all on your own; to be the “strong” one. You do not have to be alone in this journey.

Look to those around you for help: other family members, friends, neighbours, friends of your loved one, etc. You might be surprised how many people are there if you simply ask. Don’t expect others to just step up... most will not. Not because they don’t want to help, but because they don’t know what to do or they don’t want to “intrude”.

Be specific with your request. “Can you sit with mom for an hour on Thursday so I can go grocery shopping?” or “I have a doctor’s appointment on Friday. Can you stay with mom while I’m gone?”



When my mother was still alive, she was having serious back problems, on top of the IPF. She could not be left alone. I had an appointment to attend to. I finally broke down and asked a friend of mine to come to sit with mom while I was at my appointment. As it turned out, my friend very much enjoyed getting to know my mom better. She even brought it up at mom's memorial service, as one of her fondest memories of my mom.

By showing other people in your life that there are ways they can care for your loved one and you, you might be surprised at how you feel less alone and can better take care of yourself

... Warmly, Taleena Koch

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