



Learning To Be A Caregiver And Talking To Healthcare Professionals

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Are you feeling drained and weighed down with the struggles of balancing your work, home life, and care for an ageing parent, an autistic child, or a schizophrenic spouse?



Well, you aren't alone!

- There are millions of people who are in the same position as you, struggling to find a balance and keeping a positive attitude.



Reflection

Why are you at this workshop?



Objectives

- Understand the importance of giving and receiving care
- Learn effective ways to communicate with healthcare providers
- Realise expectations and learn ways to be a better caregiver



Role of A Caregiver



“Who, me? I’m not a caregiver.”

“One of the biggest dilemmas for people in the field of caregiving and for grassroots organizations has been how to reach family caregivers. The majority of family caregivers don’t self-identify. They don’t know that they are caregivers.”

*Survey on Caregiver Self-Identification, 2001
National Family Caregivers Association*



There are only four kinds of people in this world:

- ***those who have been caregivers***
- ***those who currently are caregivers***
- ***those who will be caregivers***
- ***those who will need caregivers***

-- Rosalynn Carter
Former First Lady of the United States



A caregiver can be defined as someone who gives assistance to another person who is unable / no longer able to perform the critical tasks of personal or household care necessary for everyday living.



How To Be An Effective Caregiver - Doing the Best You Can

Step 1 – Know

Step 2 – Plan

Step 3 – Communicate

Step 4 – Acknowledge

Step 5 – Self Care

[Refer to the *Handbook for Caregivers*, pp 6-9]



Considerations:

- When making the decision whether or not to provide care, consider your readiness and that of your family's, to take on this role.
- Evaluate both the positive and negative aspects.



Considerations: (cont'd)

- Taking on the role of caregiver may mean having to make changes in your social life, work schedules, stretching time and money, chronic fatigue, uncertainty of what the future holds, extra strain on you, your family, and those you come into contact.
- Your family's lifestyle and your own, will change.
- Adjustments, time, and understanding are a must.
- Taking on the role of caregiver is not an easy one.



What Your Family And Friends Can Do

Enlist the support of your family and friends: most are willing to help.

Don't reject their offers of assistance because you think the caregiving responsibility is your concern.

Don't be afraid to ask for help. There are willing hearts and hands ready to assist you in this role--let them.

Asking relatives, friends, or professionals for help is not a sign of weakness, but one of courage--courage to do what is best for your family.



Caregivers cite the following benefits they reap from caregiving:

- Enhanced sense of self-worth
- Sense of purpose and meaning
- Feeling that one has coped successfully with a potentially difficult life situation
- Improved relations with the care receiver
- Assistance from the care receiver
- Reassurance that the care receiver is getting optimal care
- Satisfaction of living in accordance with one's religious and/or ethical beliefs or principles
- Satisfaction of repaying the care receiver for what they've done for you in the past
- Enjoyment of spending time together
- Feeling closer to the care receiver as a result of helping
- Increased patience and endurance
- More enrichment and enjoyment out of life



Things To Do:

- Make your own task-list
- Organise a notebook for easy access of information
- Look up useful information



Make Your Own Task-List

In order to achieve a balance, make a list of the tasks that are involved in caring for your loved one / care receiver.

Ask yourself which of those tasks you can complete. Which ones can be completed by other family members or friends?

Are there needs that can be met by utilising services in the community?

What resources are available to you?

[Refer to the *Handbook for Caregivers*, pp 4-5]



Reflection

List the items to consider when you are making a task list (pp 5). Jot down references to back up each one.



Organise a Notebook for Easy Access of Information

It would be helpful to organise a notebook where diverse but important information are kept.

- Medical information, e.g. list of medication and dosage to be taken
- Legal information
- Financial information
- Insurance policies
- Health and social service agencies, e.g. list of contact numbers – case managers, agencies, healthcare professionals



Useful Information

Find out about caregiving related services offered by government agencies and voluntary welfare organisations in Singapore.

Agency for Integrated Care

Alzheimer's Disease Association

Health Promotion Board

Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports

Ministry of Health

National Council of Social Service

Singapore National Stroke Association



Talking to Healthcare Professionals



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- Know your healthcare professional
[refer to the *Handbook for Caregivers*, pp 34-35]

 - Know the healthcare system
 - Asking the right questions
[refer to the *Handbook for Caregivers*, pp 38-39]

 - Talking about the care plan
[refer to the *Handbook for Caregivers*, pp 40-41]

 - Talking about money
[refer to the *Handbook for Caregivers*, pp 42-43]



What Healthcare Professionals Can Do

- Caregivers can ensure an open and regular dialogue with the other health care professionals involved in their loved one's care.
- By maintaining open lines of communication, problems can be minimized and eliminated more readily.
- Primary caregivers have become extensions of their medical facility based counterparts, whether they are doctors, nurses, nutritionists, therapists, medical social workers or psychologists.



Establish Good Relationship With Healthcare Professionals

- To avoid miscommunication, appoint one family member to be the main contact person between family and healthcare professional
- Ask when do not understand medical terms / technical languages
- Write down medications, treatments or procedures which are unfamiliar to you
- Ask to consult with a medical social worker if you need assistance with information on social services, admission criteria, referrals and financial assistance schemes, etc.



- Ask to consult with occupational therapist if you need advice on modifying the home environment or in purchasing devices such as wheelchairs, hospital beds, commode chairs, grab bars, ramps, etc.
- To make the most of appointments, write down questions prior to meeting with the healthcare professionals

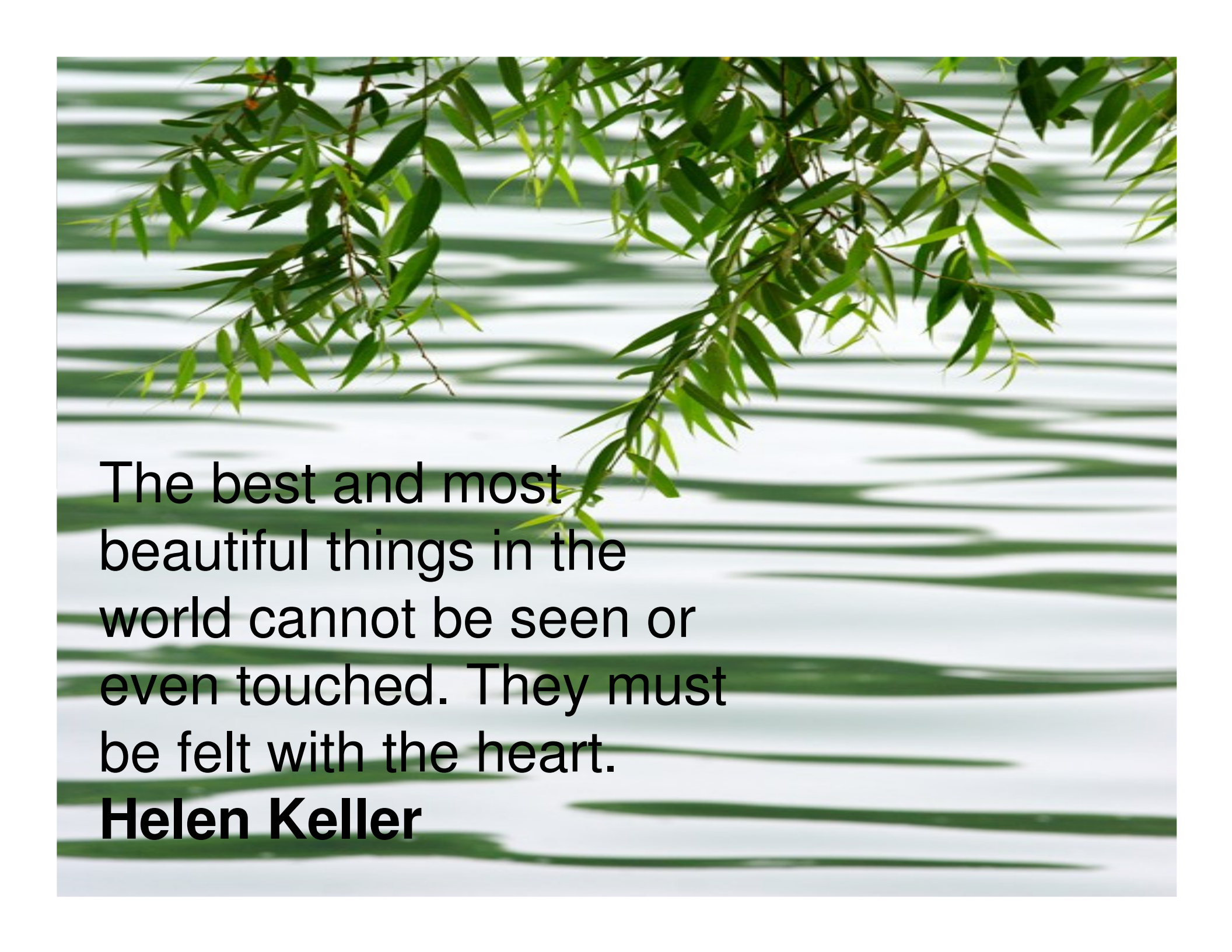


Reflection

List several reasons why you can be effective in caregiving (pp 6-7, 34-43). Jot down references to back up each one.



Sharing of Experience



The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched. They must be felt with the heart.

Helen Keller