

October 2013
Newsletter



Interfaith Caregivers

Faith in Action in Faribault Co.
Neighbors helping Seniors maintain Independence, Dignity and Quality of Life

Caregiving Isn't Funny *(except when it is)*

Unexpected humorous moments are common in caregiving. In fact, caregiving can be enlivened by the unprompted remarks and unintentional antics of an elderly parent.

But should we feel guilty about laughing? Is our laughter a sign of disrespect or a lack of love for our family member? Do we want to laugh but don't because we're afraid of seeming insensitive? Even in the most dire of circumstances, elder care professionals insist that it is OK, even helpful, to laugh.

"Not only is laughing OK, it's absolutely necessary," says Cindy Laverty, a former caregiver who founded *The Care Company* and *The Cindy Laverty talk show*. Finding and holding onto humorous stories of your own can help you keep an upbeat perspective in spite of the challenges of being a caregiver, she explains. "We go into caregiving with this big dark cloud hanging over us – it's stressful, it's so awful. When we go in with that attitude, that's what it becomes. It is stressful and awful, but when we're having a horrible day, a good day is sure to follow. And even in the midst of those horrible days, there are funny moments that happen. Recognize and appreciate those moments," she says.

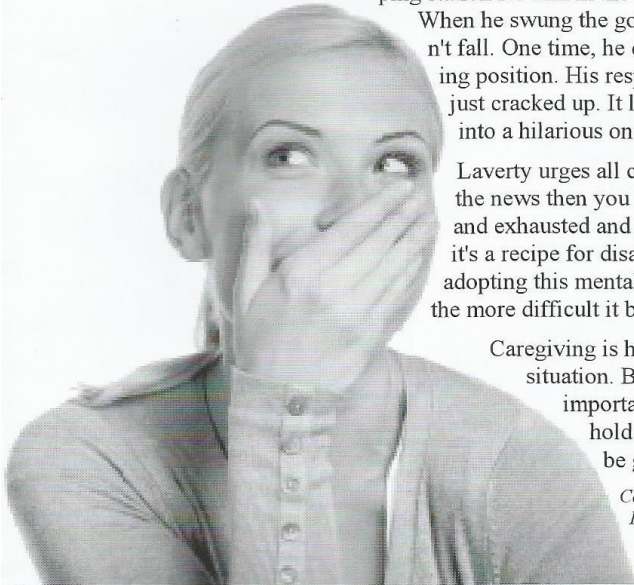
When Laverty was caring for her father-in-law, who had open heart surgery and a stroke, one of his favorite activities was golfing. Of course, he could no longer hit the greens, so the Laverty's set up a chipping station for him in the backyard. "He couldn't balance well, due to the stroke.

When he swung the golf club, I had to squat down and hold his belt, so he wouldn't fall. One time, he did fall...on top of me. We ended up in a very compromising position. His response was, 'We have to stop meeting like this.' We both just cracked up. It lightened up the moment, and turned an awkward situation into a hilarious one."

Laverty urges all caregivers to give up the role of the martyr. "If you listen to the news then you know that caregivers are supposed to feel overwhelmed and exhausted and without hope," she says. "When that mentality takes over, it's a recipe for disaster. Don't fall into victimization! I urge you to avoid adopting this mentality. It's a horrible place to be and the longer you stay there, the more difficult it becomes to get out!"

Caregiving is hard – we're not dismissing the gravity and hardship of the situation. But, during the tough times, it can be too easy to forget the importance of humor. Etch the funny memories in your spirit, and hold them in your heart. When your loved one is gone, you'll be glad you did.

Condensed from "It's Okay to Laugh: Appreciate the Humor in Caregiving"
By Marlo Sollitto, AgingCare.com



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