

# **The Romance in Caregiving**

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Recipe for Happiness  
(Author Unknown)

Ingredients:

- 2 Heaping Cups of Patience
- 2 Hearts Full of Love
- 2 Handfuls of Generosity
- Dash of Laughter
- Handful of Understanding
- Sprinkle Generously with Kindness
- Add Plenty of Faith

Instructions:

Mix all ingredients well. Spread over a lifetime. Serve to everyone you meet.

My parents just celebrated their golden anniversary. They renewed their vows in a lovely outdoor ceremony followed by a reception. My parents have in common hard work, dedication to our family members and friends, a love of good food, and a wry sense of humor.

Their marriage, like most, has had its ups and downs. Last month was no exception. Between the two of them, they experienced four trips to the Emergency Room. Luckily there was nothing seriously wrong -- just a series of seriously annoying health issues.

Throughout their rough month, I witnessed how they fulfilled their “in sickness and in health” wedding vow to each other. Each took turns caring for the other. It was a see saw of role exchanges. Luckily each one recovered well enough to care for the other before the next problem arose.

Their caring for each other helped me understand that romance isn't all about flowers, chocolates and dinner out. Real romance is a life long commitment made to another. It is the trust one has in knowing that when things are down for one, the other will help lift him or her up again. It is the comfort in knowing that your partner is there for you.

Sometimes, a spouse knows that he or she cannot help their loved one fully recover, yet he or she is still totally committed to the other. When a chronic condition or a disease strikes a spouse, the healthy person needs to question if full time care giving is a burden or a blessing. This is a true romantic gesture! A caregiver must ask himself, “How can I be the most loving and tender towards my loved one in this situation?”

A caregiver I know realized he needed a break during the day so that he could better care for his wife at home in the evenings. He recognized how 24-hour care giving made him exhausted and angry. However, he didn't want to move his wife into a facility. Adult day care was his solution.

Another caregiver I know felt very guilty leaving her husband in someone else's care, yet she felt inadequate in having the time and energy to get all the chores done. Her own health started to slip so she finally summoned the courage to ask her daughters to help her with some weekly shopping and light housekeeping. It made them feel good to help and they noticed a change in both parents' health for the better.

February 14<sup>th</sup> is the traditional day on which lovers express their love for each other. If you live with an older loved one who is frail, ill or disabled, have you found the romance in caregiving? If not, resolve to make time this month to find the information, care or support you need.

*Caregiver's Corner* is provided as a public service of the Caregiver Resource Network. The **Caregiver Resource Network** is a collaboration of West Michigan organizations dedicated to providing for the needs and welfare of family and professional caregivers within the community. Funded by the Area Agency on Aging of Western Michigan with Older American's Act Title III-E, Family Caregiver Support funds. For more information consult our website at [www.caregiverresource.net](http://www.caregiverresource.net) or call toll free at 1-888-456-5664.