

Caring

Caring is a small word with a huge meaning; the Collins Dictionary gives a simple definition of caring as; *showing concern or worrying about something or someone*. This article is about caring for someone close. Someone, who has played a significant role in our life and then arrives at a point in life where they are no longer able to care for themselves, or anyone else.

In some cases this may have been a relationship that has spanned decades of togetherness through the proverbial times of *thick and thin*.

We are seldom prepared for the time when we can no longer give the care that fulfils each other's physical and emotional needs.

Caring is tied to emotional attachment that also requires a physical action of caring. Therefore terms like *Aged care, High care, Low care, and Caring institutions*, have come into our language but all have a relationship to the act of physically caring for those who can no longer take care of themselves.

Couples age together and do their best in their own way to continue to do things for each other. However there comes a time when it is no longer possible for two people to care for each other because of their own physical and mental capacities that dwindle as we grow older.

When that time comes it is understandably difficult for couples to accept that they may have to make changes in the way in which they are able to care for each other. One person's physical and mental health may deteriorate sooner than the other and the person with the better health may take on the responsibility of caring for the other person.

The current generation of the ageing population will all be familiar with the vows of;

For richer or poorer; in sickness and in health; and till death do us part.

The solemnity of these expressions has significance to those who honour them, but how should one feel when that can no longer happen for reasons previously given? There may come a time when consideration needs to be given to place someone in the care of others, such as an aged care facility, or nursing home, for example.

All feelings are valid no matter what we feel. Some of those feelings may come in the form of a sense of guilt, or a feeling of not be able to continue that lifelong commitment. Coping can be easier when there are other family members who can assume the role of carer. As we go through life it is wise to develop a network of friends and reliable family members. When there is no family or friends to help, then help may be sought through government or private facilities and there are people such as General Practitioners and other agencies to provide advice.

It is not easy for some to seek the assistance of others; to let go and ask for help. However we all have our limitations and good sense needs to come into play.

Vince Little

TOMNET Counsellor