

# DEAR CAREGIVER, WHAT YOU'RE FEELING IS NORMAL

Dear Caregiver,

**I want you to know that what you're feeling is normal.**

*It's normal to feel like caregiving is a burden, not a blessing.*

**It's normal to want this all to be over.**

*It's normal for hating yourself for feeling that way.*

**It's normal to enjoy aspects of your parent's age and illness – like the quiet time it gives the two of you to just sit and be together.**

*It's normal to silently scream, "HURRY UP," as your parent shuffles on a walker or a cane.*

**It's normal to have judged your mother or father for how they talk, walk, dress, or eat, and wonder, "Why do they have to act so old?"**

*It's normal to question what will last longer: your parent's illness or your marriage because the strain of caregiving is creating a rift at home.*

**It's normal to feel nothing as you plow through your to do list, because it's better than being felled by a wild range of emotions.**

*It's normal to never cry.*

**It's normal to burst into tears whenever someone asks you how you're holding up.**

*It's normal to wish you could quit your job because pretending to care about your paid work is too much right now.*

**It's normal to swear at a medical insurance rep on the phone and then feel bad about it. It's not nice, but it's normal.**

*It's normal that you have no clean laundry and wear sweat pants every day because who has time to wash clothes or get dressed anymore?*

**It's normal to look at other middle-aged daughters who accompany their parents to the doctor's office and wonder how they could let themselves go.**

*It's normal to look in the bathroom mirror and realize you have let yourself go.*

**It's normal to resent caregiving for robbing you of the prime of your life.**

*It's normal to find the beauty in life and in death, in joy and in sorrow.*

**It's normal to spend a good chunk of your day just holding your mother or father's hand.**

*It's normal to like the fact you are needed and capable and able to return the gift of caring for someone you love.*

**It's normal to ask your parent's doctor 20 questions and form a medical opinion based on research you did via Google.**

*It's normal to feel guilty because you made time for a manicure, or a run or a nap.*

**It's normal to miss your friends because time with your friends is at the bottom of your to-do list, right after sleep and self-care.**

*It's normal to want to hurt anyone who tells you that you should take care of yourself.*

**It's normal that your diet consists of Twizzlers and Diet Coke because it's all you have time for, and you can throw a bag of candy and a can of soda in your bag every day.**

*It's normal to doubt your ability as a mother or father, a daughter or son, a wife or a husband, and an employee.*

**It's normal that you want to be with your kids when you are with your parent, your parent when you are with your kids, at home when you are at work and at work just so you can feel in control again.**

*It's normal to just want to be alone.*

**Caregiving is a roller coaster. Sometimes you must hang on for dear life and sometimes you need to just let go. It's normal.**