

Senior Matters

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Letting Go...

Letting go is probably the toughest thing we have to do in our lives. But, let's face it; we've done it many, many times throughout our lifetime. We celebrated birthdays as our babies grew into adults; right before our eyes, it seemed. Then they moved out of the house and went off to discover the world outside of their family. We were now empty nesters and we supported them as they started their new careers. We shed a few tears at their weddings and looked in wonderment as they sailed off into the sunset. Our lives changed significantly as we found ourselves letting go of them.

We're 'pregnant' were the next words we heard and a new chapter began for us. We were so blessed and elated to hear the pitter-patter of little feet once more. We took part in raising our grandchildren, didn't we? But that too was time-stamped and now the third generation of our family is growing up and yes, once again we have to let go.

Time passed and then our lives changed again. For whatever reason we had to let go of our jobs; that job had been more or less our life's identity. Perhaps we gave it up due to health issues as my father did, or maybe it was just time to turn it over to a younger version of ourselves. No matter what precipitated letting go of it, I'm sure that in retrospect we'd all liked to have hung on just a bit longer.

Over and over again, letting go has been a part of our lives; friends, neighbors, relatives and family members have been taken from us and reluctantly we've had to let go. Pets, that were so very much a part of our family, aged before us and eventually we had to let them go as well. Now, we find ourselves looking back on all this and realize that someday we will have to let go of the most precious gift we've ever been given; Life.

When that time comes, I don't think any of us will truly be prepared to let go. We will each have our own way of dealing with it. Much of how we handle it will trace back to our life's experiences; how we let go of our children, jobs, family, friends and anything else we held dear. Some of us will certainly be angry and who can blame us? Some of us may become depressed. Some of us will deny the inevitable. Some of us will be filled with grief. Some of us will put ourselves in God's hands and accept what is happening or maybe ask for just one more day.

In our health care practice, our caregivers and I have had the honor and privilege of helping many individuals through their end of life process. As a professional geriatric care manager, I've come to realize that having an understanding of the dying process is not nearly enough; it goes much deeper than that. It's gaining an understanding of an individual's life experiences and how they let go of things that really mattered to them in the past so we can help them deal with what lies ahead. I believe that we as professionals need to go where the individual is at in the end of their journey, not where the books tell us to take them. Maybe they're not ready to let go. I've watched so many people hang on, way beyond what any human should have to endure and I no longer ask myself why? Everybody hangs on to something, before they let go...

Until next month and a cheerier topic...stay well, stay safe and live life to the fullest.
Robert