

Difficulties of being a carer



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

A carer is somebody who looks after a friend, relative or neighbour who needs support because of their sickness, age or disability (Direct Gov) although this is a very 'loose' definition giving that some carers do a lot more than others and their personal circumstances vary so it is sometimes difficult to label someone as such. I will cover the difficulties and rewards that come with being a carer for a family member using Ann and Angus as my main case study although will be drawing in on other examples covered in Unit One, including a personal statement from a family member (Robert Shire) who I covered in Activity 12 'Your Family?' in regards to his time caring for his terminally ill wife. In the beginning of Unit One it quickly becomes apparent that there are many difficulties involved in being a carer. The difficulty that stood out the most to me was the fact that many carers feel they have little choice when it comes to decision making in regards to who will care for the family member in question.

We are made aware almost immediately that Ann was expected to take over the role of her deceased mother six years earlier, as the woman of the house and that a previous deathbed promise bound her to Angus. Ann, along with many other carers feel a strong sense of 'Family Duty' when it comes to caring for a relation, this is made clear to us later on in Unit One when we hear the views of other carers with 'disabled' children - clearly described to us during activity 11 by Tahir's mother who says 'They are your children and you have to look after them'.

Moral standing isn't the only difficulty with being a carer - physical and emotional exhaustion can often be seen in these care situations - reaching a peak called 'Carers Overload' as seen in Activity 6 - usually a crisis occurs

which seems to make carers realise how much pressure they have been dealing with, it is typically not until this point that those carers seek help, if ever at all.

Many carers, just like Ann, have to leave work to become full time carers for their parents/siblings/children/spouse which can cause huge financial worries for those families - a good example I have of this came from Activity 12 when I looked closely at a care situation which was 'closer to home' - Robert Shire, cared for his wife for 2 years while she battled terminal cancer, had they still lived within the UK their financial worries would have been considerably less, but 5 years previously they had emigrated to the Philippines. Being out of work and under huge financial pressure including costs for medical care such as Chemotherapy and numerous operations caused Robert high amounts of anxiety and stress on top of the other feelings and emotions that come with being a carer, not only were the financial issues a burden for him - but he also became very isolated during this time, with nobody to help him apart from the Doctor who visited once a week and the staff at the hospital they regularly had to visit.

Thankfully within the UK, if someone is willing to accept the 'Label' and meet the strict requirements they can claim Carers Allowance, which gives them ? 58.45p/w (Direct Gov 2012) and can help towards any direct needs of the carer. When becoming a carer, many have experienced unprecedented stress, which, before having been a carer they would never have imagined - and when caring becomes harder than what was initially expected, those carers feel as if they are at a loss in regards to what to do or where to turn.

We have seen during Unit One that caring is often frightening, especially when accidents happen like when Ann and Angus fell down the stairs whilst she was trying to help him alone, escaping injury Ann was seen to reflect on this incident when she told Angus later ' it could've killed us both'. Along with accidents, carers are forced to recognise the fact that the person they are caring for are not of the capability they used to be and in a lot of situations - especially with the elderly, are likely to become worse meaning the responsibility put on them will become greater and the work they do, harder.

In many family care situations there is a considerable amount of support lacking and many of these people aren't made aware of the outside help that they are entitled to receive - when Ann visited the Doctor she was given anti-depressants yet no information about where she could go for help with her father. Support within the family unit can also be in short supply since the stresses put onto the carers themselves causes change within the family relationships altering the dynamics at which those families work.

Bob, Ann's husband is often seen leaving the family home due to arguments. In Activity 11 Sushma's sister quoted that her family said ' why did you bring her? Why did you bring her? ' highlighting the lack of moral support within the family as a unit. Although we have picked up on many difficulties faced by carers, there are some rewards which many carers feel are worth the struggles. Although there isn't much Angus can do in terms of helping Ann anymore - he is providing a house for her and her family to live in free of charge, removing at least one financial burden.

Reciprocity isn't always actively seen in care relationships - but when asked if his care was ever reciprocated Robert quoted ' We both did what we signed up for when we married and looked after each other when care was needed, in the past Elizabeth has cared for me just as I did her' this is very similar to Jessica's account of her own family when she says that her sister used to reciprocate her brother in law, when she was well.

There is also often a sense of closeness between the person caring and those being cared for - since many times Robert was thanked for all that he did and reminded he was loved and appreciated regularly - Angus also reminds Ann of this when he says about her being his favourite and about how he loves her smile.

Reflecting back upon Unit One I think it is fair to say that from the outside there seems to be many more difficulties associated with being a carer than there are rewards but on a personal level these may not seem so obvious, in the grand scheme of things there does seem to be a lot of help available albeit that it may take a lot of perseverance to receive. It is difficult to know all the difficulties and rewards of being a carer as a whole when there are so many different families caring - with different circumstances, backgrounds and views.

I hope this essay has helped to highlight just a few of the difficulties that come with being a carer - and reiterated that all isn't as it seems to the outside eyes. Word Count: 1200 References DirectGov (Online) (www.directgov.co.uk) K101 introduction to health and social care (Who cares? : 1) Activity 11 Page 44 Activity 6 Page 29 & DVD Material K101. Activity 12 '

Your family' Page 46 - Robert Shire. Activity 1 - DVD Material K101 - an incident on the stairs .