

Stroke Caregivers Share ABCs of Caring

The poem below was written by a husband who cared for his wife after suffering a stroke. He created it after participating in a discussion group for stroke patient caregivers. Researchers examined the more than 2,100 e-mails of all the group participants and confirmed support existed for the word themes in the ABCs poem.

Stroke Caregiver's ABCs

I have learned

- A to **ANTICIPATE**, anticipate, and anticipate.
- B to **BEGIN** in small steps so my wife is not frustrated by failing to achieve.
- C to **COORDINATE** many people's schedules, so that meetings can be made, doctors' appointments can be kept, and I can go about my life, too.
- D that caregiving is **DEDICATED** work. You can't do it halfway.
- E that caregiving is **EMOTIONAL**. Every emotion from love to hate, fear and anger, apathy and nurturing is in there.
- F the meaning of **FATIGUE**. I am tired of being tired.
- G to be **GRATEFUL** to all the people who have helped us, and who continue to look out for me and my wife.
- H more about feminine **HYGIENE** than I knew before.
- I to look forward to the research **INTERVIEWER'S** calls.
- J to **JUMP** through more hoops than I care to write about and to **JUGGLE** all aspects of life.
- K that stroke **KILLS** too many people and to be thankful that my wife was not one of them.
- L that **LOVE** is eternal and it is the foundation of all this and with it we can do anything.
- M about **MONEY**, how to spend it, save it, find it, fear it, and deal.
- N that **NEVER** is an evil word and I don't use it.
- O to be **OPTIMISTIC** about the little things in life both for me and my wife.
- P to be **PATIENT**, patient, patient—haven't we all?
- Q to fear **QUIET**, and to see if my wife is okay when I do not hear her. I have learned how to give **QUALITY** care and to recognize people of **QUALITY** when I see it.
- R a new **RESPECT** for those who dedicate their lives to helping survivors and caregivers.
- S to be more **SENSITIVE** to my wife's emotions and to anticipate mood **SWINGS**. I have learned that caregivers can be really moody, too.
- T to **TRUST** in God who loves me and my wife and who will give me strength to succeed and watch over all of us.
- U to **UNDERSTAND** that I cannot control everything and I will never have it all **UNDER CONTROL**.
- V the **VALUE** of this group and will miss it a lot.
- W that caregiving is a **WE** thing and **WE** need each other in cyberspace and in real life.
- X to **XPECT** anything and plan for the unexpected.
- Y to appreciate the memories of **YOUTH** and to value what we can do today.
- Z a **ZILLION** things.

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