

As seen in



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From the heart

Caregivers show love year-round

Valentine's Day is not in its origin a Jewish holiday; it's a fun "Hallmark" holiday that gives us license to proclaim our love. This time of year, red and pink hearts decorate supermarkets and most retail store windows. For people that are in the caregiving profession, both as family members and those that are in the home-care business, the symbol of the heart is not seasonal but rather a daily reminder of the commitment and the honor of caring for loved ones.

It is this spirit of love and caring that moves us to honor and protect those closest to our hearts: our family, especially our aging parents. Valentine's Day is really an affirmation of the fifth commandment, which teaches us to honor and respect our parents. It is not surprising that while the first through fourth commandments teach us how to respect God, the fifth commandment is the link conveying the belief that respect for our fellow man begins in the home.

Think back to your childhood — remember the times your mom or dad was there for you. Whether it was caring for you when you were home sick from school, helping you with your homework or cheering you on from the sidelines, your parents were by your side with pride and love.

Consistent with the cyclical nature of life, parents begin to rely on their children and roles become reversed. With the passage of time, we must recognize with sensitivity when the tides begin to shift. As our parents age, it's important for us to recognize the difficulty they must experience as they lose their sense of independence and self-sufficiency. It is our duty as their loving children to assist them while maintaining their dignity and respecting their changing needs. We must be ever ready to adapt the care and attention we provide to them.

The family unit is highly valued within the Jewish community. We are raised with a powerful and protective instinct to keep the family

strong, safe and dedicated to one another. While every family has a unique dynamic, the common thread of family is that it is unlike any other relationship in life. We are the product of the love and experience of our previous generations. This Valentine's Day, let's make family the focus, and honor our moms and dads for the love and support they showed us during our formative years. Honoring the legacy of family is an integral part of our Jewish culture, and a value we should all strive to mirror.

For those of us that find ourselves as caregivers during this Valentine's Day, remember the following 10 important tips from the National Family

Caregiver's Association:

1. Caregiving is a job and respite is your earned right. Reward yourself with respite breaks often.
2. Watch out for signs of depression, and don't delay in getting professional help when you need it.
3. When people offer to help, accept the offer and suggest specific things that they can do.
4. Educate yourself about your loved one's condition and how to communicate effectively with doctors.
5. There's a difference between caring and doing. Be open to technologies and ideas that promote your loved one's independence.
6. Trust your instincts. Most of the time they'll lead you in the right direction.
7. Caregivers often do a lot of lifting, pushing, and pulling. Be good to your back.
8. Grieve for your losses, and then allow yourself to dream new dreams.
9. Seek support from other caregivers. There is great strength in knowing that you are not alone.
10. Stand up for your rights as a caregiver and a citizen.



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