The Reluctant Caregiver

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Boston Senior Home Care is invested in the health and well-being of the caregivers that assist our consumers. Caregiving can take a hefty emotional and physical toll, but it’s very common for caregivers to feel uncomfortable discussing difficulties or frustrations they may encounter in the process.

A recent article on The New York Times’ “The New Old Age” blog talks about the experience of caregivers who are providing care out of a sense of duty and responsibility without accompanying feelings of overwhelming love. These caregivers object to the term “loved one” when caring for an aging relative to fulfill an obligation but not because of any emotional connection. The author of the article, Paula Span, considers these people to be “reluctant caregivers” and believes many people providing care for aging relatives experience times of guilt and resentment. Click here to read the article in full.

In addition to Ms. Span’s advice, the article contains words of wisdom from Barbara Moscowitz, a senior geriatric social worker at Massachusetts General Hospital. For example:

“We need to allow people to be reluctant […] It means they’re dutiful; they’re responsible. Those are admirable qualities.”

At the same time, Ms. Moscowitz encourages these reluctant caregivers to seek out support groups and community services where they can receive mental and physical respite.

“Caregiving only goes one-way, it gets harder, more complex. […] Support groups and community resources are like having a first aid kit. It’s going to feel like even more of a burden, and you need to be armed.”

It’s important for all caregivers to recognize that, regardless of the motivations for providing care, feeling frustrated and being overwhelmed are both common and understandable reactions. Even the most positive caregiving relationship goes through rough patches. BSHC recognizes this facet of caregiving, which is why we offer our Family Caregiver Support Program. We offer a range of services, tools, and advice for caregivers throughout the city of Boston. If you or someone you know is a caregiver, please consider making a referral today!