

Helping caregivers through their journey one step at a time.

From Fostering to Adoption to Raising Grandchildren

By: **C.F.**

My husband and I had been children's ministers for many years. After our birth children left home we decided we wanted to foster sexually abused teen girls. We were told those were the ones who were harder to place. The ones no one wanted. We took special training to equip us for the problems we could encounter. In our training it was explained to us that, many times, abused children will repeat the abuse they suffered with their own children. As Christians, that was hard to believe, especially when they would now be in a Christian home with loving parents.

At a point in time we chose to adopt two girls. They had been severely abused by their family members, but we thought it would be ok. After high school, they both had two children of their own. One had two boys, the other with two girls. The mother of the boys married their father but divorced after four years of marriage. Her husband got custody of the boys. The other daughter's two girls were 15 months apart by two different men. The father of one of the girls was a married man who left her and went back to his wife. This daughter hung out with some friends from high school who knew the married man. These friends attempted to kidnap the baby girls and take them to Florida. We intervened and got guardianship of the babies. Two and a half years later we let Mom have them back.

After a year or so, she again began hanging out with these same people. Her oldest was then six years old. Her second daughter was about four or five and rarely saw her father. Mom had lost her apartment and now lived with her friends, to whom she gave total control of

her daughters. They were brutal people. They beat and abused the girls in many different ways. We could only see them once or twice a year. The girls were threatened not to "talk."

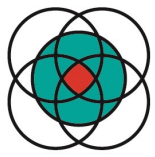
The father of the oldest granddaughter returned and married our daughter. He began to start touching his daughter inappropriately. The younger daughter was molested by the husband of her mother's friend.

We regained custody of the girls but the oldest ended up in foster care due to behavioral problems. She was in five different foster homes in a year's time. The youngest now lives with us and is doing better, thanks to therapy. She is learning coping skills. She graduates this year and plans to go to college.

The abuse affected both girls differently. The oldest is now 19, acts like a small child and is physically abusive. The younger daughter is now 17 and suffers from PTSD and night tremors.

Just because placement doesn't always work in your home, grandparents should not beat themselves up over it. The emotional baggage these kids bring to your home can be overwhelming. There has been no financial assistance whatsoever, but God has provided. We've given up things for these two girls, but the goal always was to provide unconditional love.

Do you have an email address? Want to receive your newsletters electronically? Please submit your email address to me for future correspondence! You can email me at jferri@thrive-alliance.org. If you desire a listing of caregiver support groups whether live or virtual please e-mail or call me at **812-372-6918**. We also have a Thrive Alliance Caregiver Resources Facebook group. Email me if you would like to be a part of the group.



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If You're a Caregiver for Someone With Heart Disease, Here Are the Top Physical and Emotional Support Tips to Keep In Mind

By Kaitlin Vogel

If this is your first time being a caregiver for someone with heart disease, chances are you have a long list of questions. For example, during times when the patient is in pain, are there certain things you should say and not say? What will be the most comforting?

As a role that requires a great deal of emotional and physical support, it's important to be informed about how to provide optimal care. To help you get started, here's a guide filled with doctor and therapist-backed tips.

How to provide emotional support to someone with heart disease

Here are some emotional care tips to keep in mind:

Do not tell someone with a serious illness that they "look great" or are "doing great"

"Those kinds of statements cause stress and guilt. It makes someone feel that they have to say they feel good or to do more than they should. It induces guilt, anger, anxiety and so much more," says **Jill Johnson-Young, LCSW**.

Instead, acknowledge that they do not have the kind of energy they used to, and ask what it's like adapting to where they are now. Get them to tell the story of how they got where they are and what they plan to do from here, Johnson-Young adds. What's next? What might they need?

Be a listener, not a teller

Everyone's experience with heart disease is different. It's not helpful to act like you understand what this person is going through. Instead, the best way to comfort someone is to simply listen. "Do not share your story of others with the same disease," Johnson-Young explains.

Use humor

Laughter is one of the greatest gifts you can give someone who has a serious illness. "Many people will not laugh with someone who is seriously ill, but humor helps," says Johnson-Young.

Check in often

Having a heart problem can be emotionally distressing and lead to depression and anxiety. "Caregivers can help by checking in with the patient frequently, helping make doctor's appointments, and visiting their loved ones with

heart disease," says **Dr. Jennifer Haythe, MD**, Associate Professor of Medicine and Co-director of Columbia Women's Heart Center.

Be mindful of the symptoms of depression

It's also important to watch for signs of depression like excessive sleep or insomnia, fatigue, flattened affect, withdrawal from typical activities and change in appetite, Dr. Haythe explains. If you're noticing any of those signs, it may be time to get a mental health expert like a therapist involved.

Encourage physical activity when possible

Making time for movement can help improve a patient's mental state. "Caregivers should encourage patients to take walks or participate in physician approved exercise," says Dr. Haythe.

If you are worried your loved one is in emotional distress, contact their doctor. It's also important to consider psychotherapy or medication to treat depression if needed, Dr. Haythe explains. Depression is associated with worse outcomes in cardiac patients.

How to provide physical support to someone with heart disease

Assist with day-to-day tasks

People living with cardiovascular disease can be limited in their activities of daily living. "It's especially helpful to assist them with activities like cooking, bathing, and getting dressed," Dr. Haythe explains. "They may also need help buying groceries, arranging transportation and childcare."

Organize medication

Knowing what pills to take at what times is important. And by simplifying the process, it's one less thing for the patient to worry about. "I often ask caregivers to put together the week's medications in an easy-to-use pill pack container," says Dr. Haythe.

Check weight and other vitals

It is also essential to help the patient check their daily weight, and even if only periodically, their blood pressure and other vital signs as requested by the doctor and keep a log to show at the next visit, Dr. Haythe explains.



FRENCH COUNTRY SLOW COOKER CHICKEN

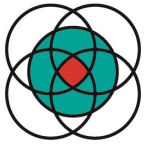
INGREDIENTS

- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 4 carrots, sliced
- 4 celery ribs, sliced
- 6 -8 boneless skinless chicken breasts (about 1 1/2 to 2 lbs)
- 1 teaspoon dried tarragon
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- salt and black pepper
- 1(10 3/4 ounce) can condensed cream of chicken soup
- 1(1 ounce) envelope dry onion soup mix
- 1/3 cup apple juice



DIRECTIONS

1. Place onion, carrots, and celery in slow cooker. Arrange chicken over vegetables. Sprinkle with tarragon, thyme, salt, and pepper.
2. Pour soup over chicken. Sprinkle with dry onion soup mix and then pour in apple juice. Cover; cook on Low 5-6 hours stirring once during cooking.
3. Serve over rice.



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