



Between Friends

Thoughts on Caregiving
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The Hybrid Caregiver

The hybrid caregiver. I loved the term when I first heard it recently on the radio in a discussion about home care, although at the time, I didn't quite grasp the concept of what it meant.

The word "hybrid" has several definitions. It can be

- something that has two or more different types of components performing the same function
- a newly created whole made up of complicated and related parts
- a joint effort

Hybrid roses are an example. Take two distinct roses, get them together with a bit of science, and a third, distinctly different, hybrid rose is produced.

As human beings, you can probably make a case that we are all "hybrids."

Most recently, the term hybrid has taken on a new meaning. Hybrid cars run on two or more fuel sources. As a result, they are more energy efficient, and environmentally friendly.

This is where the "hybrid caregiver" concept makes a lot of sense. As caregivers, we are multitaskers. We do whatever needs to be done for our loved ones.

We are their designated drivers, nutritionists, medication managers, errand runners, personal shoppers, bill-payers, money managers, maids, appointment-makers, personal care providers, mess cleaner-uppers, medical care coordinators, social event and activity planners...we do it all.

Sometimes, we are joyful caregivers. At other times, we are tired, cranky, stressed, unhappy, and not all that pleasant to be around. At times like that, we aren't very efficient, either. We're like a single-purpose engine, idling and overheating, and in dire need of a tune up (or complete overhaul).

The "hybrid" caregiver, however, recognizes that sharing the care of their loved ones with others helps them be better caregivers, and can lead to a smoother running, more energy-efficient, and environmentally friendly life for all involved.

This is the month in which we celebrate National Adult Day Services Week. Later this year, A Friend's House will celebrate its twenty-fifth year of sharing the care of physically and/or memory impaired adults with families throughout southeastern Michigan.

Adult day centers are also "hybrid caregivers," providing a multitude of support services for caregivers as well as for care receivers.

Some caregivers turn to A Friend's House to give themselves a break, or to give their loved ones a safe place to be while the caregiver works, does errands, or just takes a few hours to be alone and re-energize. Other caregivers choose adult day services to give their loved ones an opportunity to socialize with other people.

Whatever the reason, share the care. Just because you feel you don't need a break from care demands doesn't mean that your loved one wouldn't benefit from some time away from you.

Become a hybrid caregiver. And encourage others to do the same.

A Friend's House Adult Day Services

A program of Catholic Services of Macomb
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