



BOOK REVIEW *By Kevin Miles*

CARING IN THE COMFORT OF HOME, A GUIDE FOR CARERS (UK Edition)

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My wife was diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease 17 years ago. For the first 11 years I was her partner who tried to support her as the disease progressed, her needing to stop work, difficulties with medications and side effects. I really didn't think of myself as a carer as such. I did many things I wanted to do and we did much together. We travelled, relocated an old house on to 6 hectares of land, had a large barn built, developed gardens, attempted horticulture enterprises, ran stock etc.

When Sandy had a stroke 6 years ago things changed dramatically for both of us.

I think for many couples it is the advent of a more traumatic event which may suddenly see the role of carer go from a slowly progressive situation to a more full-on occupation.

I have had to learn or discover on my own much that is written about in this book. From my experience I would consider a New Zealand version to be of value. Notwithstanding, there is still much that can be gained from reading this book.

The book is divided into 9 chapters.

In Chapter one, 'The First Steps as a Carer', there is an interesting passage in a section about Choosing to become a Carer. "Sometimes you may feel you have no choice about whether you become a carer and, understandably, you may feel a mix of complex emotions. For others, caring may be a conscious choice. Whatever your situation, becoming a carer can raise all kinds of thoughts and dilemmas...

"If you do have the opportunity to talk it through, make choices and to set some boundaries, it will

probably benefit both you and the person you care for in the long term".

As a carer it is valuable if you can arrange your own support system. From experience, that is not always easy!!

Chapter Two: 'Making the Most of Help Available'. It is important that you become aware of everything that is able to be accessed. I have found it essential to document everything and keeping a regular diary invaluable. An interesting point in the Chapter suggests that in the UK a carer has the right to an assessment of their needs. Although that has happened to some degree to me in the provision of carer relief days, it is not done here as a rigorous process.

The other Chapters include information on costs (not directly relevant to NZ), caring day by day, avoiding burnout, diet and nutrition, injury prevention (very important for both of you), emergencies and first aid.

I will finish with one other interesting quote. "Many people begin caring as if it were a sprint. They think they can and must do everything themselves. (Guilty!) You may be able to do that for a few weeks or even months, but the average carer spends more than four years in the role, and no one can sprint for that long! Instead, pace yourself from the start. Learn to say no, if that is what you want to say".

Caring in the Comfort of Home is available on loan from Parkinson's New Zealand's Library. To borrow this, or any other of the books in the Library, please email info@parkinsons.org.nz or telephone 0800 473 4636.



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