

A Caregiver's Bill of Rights

I HAVE THE RIGHT...

TO take care of myself. This is not an act of selfishness, but will give me the capability of taking better care of my relatives.

TO seek help from others even though my relative may object. I recognize the limits of my own endurance and strength.

TO maintain facets of my own life that do not include the person I care for, just as I would if he or she were healthy. I know that I do everything that I reasonably can for this person, and I have the right to do some things just for myself.

TO get angry, be depressed and express other difficult feelings occasionally.

TO reject any attempt by my relative (either consciously or unconsciously) to manipulate me through guilt, anger or depression.

TO receive consideration, affection, forgiveness and acceptance for what I do from my loved one for as long as I offer these qualities in return.

TO take pride in what I am accomplishing and to applaud the courage it has sometimes taken to meet the needs of my relative.

TO protect my individuality and my right to make a life for myself that will sustain me when my relative no longer needs my full time help.

To expect and demand that as new strides are made in finding resources to aid physically and mentally impaired older persons in our country, that similar strides will be made toward ailing and supporting caregivers.

Excerpted from Caregiving: Helping An Aging Loved One, Scott Foresman and Company Lifelong Learning Division-AARP, 1985.