

Grief and loss

When care giving ends

It is common for carers to have feelings of loss and grief as their life and the life of the person they care for, is changed due to a chronic illness. Like grieving after a death, adjusting to the changes that a chronic illness brings is a process. It can affect us in many different ways – emotionally, mentally, physically, and spiritually.

When a loved one moves to a nursing home or residential facility it can be one of the most difficult transitions for everyone involved. As a family member you may grieve another change in your relationship. Feelings of loss and grief can be mixed up with guilt and relief, which can last for a surprisingly long time.

It takes time to adjust to a move to nursing home care. It can take time for the person with dementia or chronic illness to settle into their new environment. It can take time for you to adjust to a new routine and you may feel a wide range of emotions.

You may miss the person's presence, you may experience emptiness, you may miss your role as a carer, you may feel very tired, both physically and emotionally. You may be relieved that the day-to-day responsibility of caring is no longer there and you may want to continue to be involved, but in a different way.

What can help

- You may experience a variety of emotions from relief, anger, despair and loss. Many people feel guilty for a while afterwards. Don't hold onto these feelings, talk to family and friends.
- Life will change for you if you are no longer caring full time. Your daily routine previously revolved around caring for your relative, creating a structure to your day Find activities and clubs where you are able to meet old and new friends. reach out to friends you enjoy spending time with.
- Make sure that you get some support from family or friends after you have left and in the days, weeks and months that follow.
- Visiting your loved one in their new home is important and can be one part of your new routine. You will gradually build a life for yourself that includes visits and you will work out the frequency and length of visits that works for you. Other family members and friends can also visit.

- If you still want to be involved in caring for your relative, speak to the staff and explain exactly what you would like to continue to do. Ask them for suggestions on how you can help.
- Some nursing homes have support groups where relatives can regularly meet and speak with other family caregivers going through similar experiences.

Resources

The **Competition and Consumer Protection Commission** provides information on things to think about when looking to secure nursing home care, such as how to choose a nursing home and the nursing home support scheme. For more information:

<https://www.ccpic.ie/consumers/money/budgeting/life-stages/moving-to-a-nursing-home/>

Citizens Information have a section entitled 'Moving from home to long term care'. It includes information about what is nursing home or long term care, things to consider when choosing a nursing home, financial information etc. For more information:

https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/health/health_services/health_services_for_older_people/moving_from_home_to_long_term_care.html

Age Action is a advocacy organisation for older people Ireland's. Their website has information on a variety of aspects of nursing home care and anyone can call their information Service for more information

<https://www.ageaction.ie/how-we-can-help/information/questions-about-nursing-homes>

Life for Caregivers after Placing a Relative with Dementia in a Nursing Home A Guide for Family Caregivers and Nursing Home Staff is a booklet written for family caregivers who have recently placed their relatives with dementia in long-term care and for nursing home staff involved in their day-to- day care. It aims to help help family caregivers come to terms with life after having recently placed a relative with dementia in long term care. For more information:

<http://dementiathways.ie/filecache/aa3/2b8/51-life-for-caregivers.pdf>

The **Irish Hospice Foundation** and **The Alzheimer Society of Ireland** developed a number of booklets on grief and loss that carers experience throughout the caregiving journey, which includes the transition into long term residential care. For more information:

<https://hospicefoundation.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Alzheimers-society-of-Ireland-Loss-and-grief-when-a-family-member-has-dementia.pdf>

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