

Rising to the Occasion

Category: Tough Calls

written by Ronna L. Edelstein | October 1, 2023

Ma lived a blessed life: more than six decades of marriage, two professionally successful children (a physician and a teacher), and three wonderful grandchildren. Yet, these gifts mattered less to her than her forty years working in a baby/children's store. When health issues forced her to retire at age eighty-two, she lost her heart and her spirit. Ma spent the days in her old recliner, wearing only a tattered white T-shirt and equally torn white underwear. She only got up to use the bathroom and wander the halls of her apartment building at night.

Seeing how her decline and depression were negatively affecting my beloved dad led me to make a difficult call: to put Ma into a healthcare facility. Extensive research enabled me to find a facility close to our home, which would allow for daily visits. Many tours of the building convinced me that the staff cared and that the environment was a clean one. I knew my tough call to move Ma from her home was the right choice, but every time Ma stared at me with anger, I dissolved into guilt. Yet, life went on; I moved in with Dad and took quality care of him—and made sure that Ma was treated with respect.

This tough call was a decision-making one; the next was a literal one—phoning my two adult children that their grandma had died in her hospice bed. I gave myself time to calm down before dialing. Once I told my children the news, they cried with me—and then shared beautiful memories of the grandma they had loved and who had been so kind to them.

I have learned in my seventy-six years of life that not every day involves running barefoot through the park, watching the sun rise over the ocean, or becoming lost in a good book or excellent stage production. Instead, life consists of challenges, and it requires someone to rise to the occasion and make the tough calls that others find difficult or impossible to do. I do not consider myself an emotionally strong person, but I have found that I have the ability to step forward and do what must be done. I cherish the beautiful moments of life, but I accept and deal with the darker ones because I have no other choice.

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