

Do You Resent Your Sibling For Not Helping You Care Give?

In most families, there is a primary caregiver no matter how many siblings there are. Some try to divvy up the responsibilities, but it's rarely equal distribution because of differing people's lives—jobs, distance, abilities, etc. In many families, one sibling gets the brunt of the responsibility.

And even if you agreed to it, over time, resentment can build.

I know of so many families who are torn apart because of this very issue. Why won't they help out?

Here are a few reasons why siblings won't participate: *they live further away, they can't (or won't) quit their job or cut back on hours to help, they have other responsibilities such as children and already feel overwhelmed, they say you're controlling and they've just given up, they're scared and don't know how to help and think you're more qualified/competent, they're lazy, selfish and just don't want to be bothered (or so it seems).*

While any or all of those above reasons may apply, you still need—and deserve help. Where are you?

- How do I get my sibling to help?
- My sibling refuses to help and I'm mad as hell.
- My parents still favour the uninvolved sibling over me.
- My siblings say I'm controlling and they don't like my decisions, but they're not involved enough to help me work it out.
- My loved one is gone and I can't get over this hurt and resentment. Our relationship is ruined.

How do I get my sibling to help?

SAY you need help. Be specific.

Ask them to do one thing at a time.

Tell them this isn't fair and that distance, fear, raising a family isn't an excuse and there are still ways to pitch in.

Give them one "job" at a time, it gives them something to focus on.

Use your controlled anger to INSIST they find a way to help out—monetarily, by hiring help, by buying groceries or your parent's meds—anything tangible is a start.

Or, realize your anger is only hurting you and learn to accept them “as is.” Consider your role as a caregiver while exhausting and frustrating, a privilege, and those who choose not to participate are missing out on something really profound.

My sibling won't help, and I'm mad as hell

Use your anger and say loud and clear what you need, or use it as energy (jet fuel) to do all you need to do in order to survive. But know that at some point, you will need to let it go. Anger is jet fuel, but if you drink it, consume it, steep in it, it will poison you. Do you really want to spend your precious time on earth mad as hell? This isn't what caregiving is meant to do. It's meant to heal, teach, and guide us.

My parent favours my other sibling

There's a scene in Meet Joe Black that I love. The man who the devil is going to take is having a lavish, over the top birthday party given to him by one of his two daughters. It's clearly obvious throughout the film that he favours his other daughter—the one not giving him the party. He asks his daughter (party giver) why she loves him so much?

She answers: “Everyone has a favourite, and you happen to be mine.” She had made peace with this. She loved freely and easily and didn't demand exact reciprocal love. She gave it as a gift.

Can you imagine loving that freely?

With no expectation—or need to have it returned to you in exact measured form? We have no control over what others do or feel, but we do have control over our own choices. I so hope I can get to this place.

My siblings say I'm controlling...

Are you? You probably are. I haven't met a caregiver who isn't—including myself. You have to be, look what you're doing? It's a bowl full of fishing hooks and if you try to pull apart if you became controlling because they wouldn't help—or if you were controlling and bossy all your life—well, it's a useless argument. Let them know that yes, someone has to be in control, and it's kind of fallen to you—but you will listen.

You do want (and need) to value their input even though there will be times that you may need to feel you have to override that if it's something you have to deal with and no one else is around. Also realize that you may have overstepped your bounds, you may be really bossy and fussy, and want it all done your way—and you may need to listen to at least some of what they have to say—and try.

I know you don't want to hear this, that after all you've done you feel like I'm beating up on you too. Just realize I am you. I was that bossy control freak caregiver. And in some ways, I make no apologies—it got me through—and I truly didn't have anyone rushing

down to help me take care of my mom, but...I still had things to learn, and I needed to tone it down at times—and listen.

My loved one is gone now, and I still can't get over the hurt and resentment...

Ask yourself why you need to hold on to this. Why does it matter any more? Can you not move on because it would be admitting that mom, dad, spouse, sister is truly gone? Are you obsessing about how everyone just left you, abandoned you, and how wrong that was, how cold that was, how you almost killed yourself and they did very, precious little...

My sibling is selfish, lazy and just doesn't care.

I suspect this is the case—for a very select few. If it is, then let it go. Love them “as is” and perhaps even love them from afar. You can't fix every relationship. They have to own their part. Concentrate on you, on getting help and resources you need. There are church groups, community organizations, senior resources that can help tremendously—and they want to. You want help from people who willingly give it. Let's face it, there are a few totally self-centered folks out there who won't even extend a hand for their own family. Sad, but true. You can't let that eat you alive.

Do you really want to spend your whole life in this vortex?

Even if you sever ties, it's not enough if you haven't let go of the resentments. I know people who haven't seen their sibling for years and years and yet when they talk about their rift, you'd think it happened that morning.

I'm telling you, it's not good for you. It's not worth it. And it's no way to honour the passing of your loved one.

Even if you don't have to see them—ever again (not that I'm recommending this), I promise you, this won't go away unless you make conscious decision. Whatever juices you're stewing in—resentment, anger, hurt, *you will eventually absorb*, and it will eventually become a part of who you are on a cellular level.

Let the bitter thoughts go. Move on. Fill your life with new and good people and new journeys. Wish your siblings well. Understand they were scared, lost, felt awkward, missed an opportunity. Feel sorry for them, if you need to. They're the ones that missed out on all you've learned, how much you've grown.

Also know that people change. I know of siblings who missed out on one parent's care—for a variety of reasons—but then put in time and half on the next parent—or with another sibling—or a neighbour.

This isn't tit-for-tat. Stop looking for payment or recognition—I hope you get it, and I hope you put up a big fuss and get others involved—as much for them as for you. I hate to harp on the law of attraction thing, but it makes sense here: the more you focus on what you don't have—in this case help from your siblings—the more you get just that. No help from your siblings.

But I also hope that you can love them beyond their limitations and fears. It doesn't mean they're not good people. That's not our place to judge, and who knows what small act of kindness they do, what ways they reach out to others.

By loving them when they don't deserve it, we bring out the best in ourselves and act the most like our creator. I know there are countless times in my life when I've screwed up, missed the moment, acted stubborn, selfish, and was no where near the person I aspire to be.

We all need a little mercy.

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