

I Can't Make Any More Decisions

Making decisions is something we do on a daily basis and it is one of those things we don't give much thought to or put much emphasis on until the decisions we have to make are serious with potential negative consequences. We make decisions and choices each and everyday from the simple, (what I will wear today) to the more complex, (deciding on a LTC facility for respite or when to bring in home care support for loved ones).

Most decisions that we make we won't think twice about. For caregivers the decisions you need to make can be harder due to the fact that you are making decisions for another person. Making decisions that impact another can cause much stress and anxiety. What if you make a mistake? What if the decision you make turns out to be the wrong one? How do you live with that? Decisions need to be made and you will need to live with the decisions and choices you make. As much as you may not want to hear it, and feel like you just cannot make another decision, the fact is you have to. You do not have the luxury of not making decisions; it will be up to you.

Caregivers who are dealing with stressful events on a daily basis may find it more and more difficult to make even the smallest decision. Why? Well, it's most likely due to being overwhelmed, just too tired or burnt out from having to make endless decisions for yourself and the person you care for.

This is more common than you may think. Many caregivers express frustration with being solely responsible for making more if not all decisions. If you are caring for a spouse you may long for the days when you made decisions together as a team, with the ability to bounce ideas off one another. If you are caring for an aging parent it may be difficult to try and make decisions for a person who made all the decisions for themselves and you, when you were younger. If you are caring for a child that has special or serious needs you may feel the weight of the world each time you have to make a choice or decision on a possible treatment option.

Making decisions is not easy but there are a few things you might want to consider that may help you.

Acceptance

First things first, we all make mistakes. Accept that as fact and move on. If you make a decision based on the best information you had and in the best interest of the person in question, then you have done your best. Some things are simply out of your control. If you feel guilt or regret about a decision you made you need to ask yourself if you made that decision with the best intentions and interests of your loved one and if you did then you could not have done any better. Let it go and move forward.

Don't Procrastinate

It may feel like putting off making a decision will make you feel better and for a fraction of a second it might just do that, but honestly, all it does is postpone the inevitable. Putting off making decisions has the opposite effect and will actually cause you more stress and anxiety in the long run. Not making a decision is in fact making a decision; it's just not a good one. The only real way to relieve the stress around decision-making is to bite the bullet, make the decision, and move on.

Talk it out

Chances are that before you made any big decision in life you consulted with family, close friends, doctors, or other health professionals and this is a good idea. Talking things over with people you trust can help put things in proper perspective. There is nothing better than talking to someone who will listen and help guide you when you are not thinking clearly.

Tune into Your Intuition

What is your gut telling you? Intuition by definition is the instinctive knowledge or belief obtained neither by reason nor by perception. Your intuition is a combination of your past experiences and personal values and it is worth listening to. Are you wrestling with a decision because you have second thoughts or is something just not sitting right with you? Sticking to your gut reaction can produce desired results. Believe in yourself and listen to your inner voice.

Don't think about it too long

While it is a good idea to think things through, and do some research, taking too long may just confuse matters. Good decisions can be made without endlessly thinking, discussing and researching. It can be helpful to make a list of all the pros and cons to your choices. This list can help you clarify your situation and come to a decision. Once a decision is made leave the, "should have", "could have", or "would have's" in the past. If you wait for too long life has a way of taking care of things for you and not always to your satisfaction.

After a full day, week, month, year etc. of giving care to a loved one you have likely made hundreds of decisions and the longer you are in a caregiving role those decisions may be more difficult to make. Good decision-making is a learned skill and as a caregiver you will have more experience with this than most. Give yourself a break, it's not easy and you are doing the best you can. If you can look yourself in the mirror at the end of the day and know in your heart you did your best, warts and all, what more could you possibly do? Would you expect more of others if they were in your situation? Be gentle with yourself, this is not easy and if others think it is let them try it.

*You viewed this article on the Caregivers Nova Scotia website www.CaregiversNS.org. For more information, contact us toll-free at 1.877.488.733.