**5 Reasons You Don’t Want To Be A Hero In Caregiving**

“She heroically cared for her mother.” “He is a real hero in the way he’s caring for his wife.” I’ve heard many versions of this sentiment referring to someone in the caregiving role as a “hero.” While the person commenting means to compliment the caregiver, the term “hero” can unintentionally pressure mere mortal caregivers to be superheroes. Here are 5 reasons why caregivers should *not* strive to be heroes:

1. **Heroes are super-human.** Caregivers are not. Caregivers are simply human beings doing their best to take care of someone they love who is injured, ill or disabled.They don’t possess the super powers or mystical abilities of a superhero. Caregivers sometimes wish they did have super powers but it’s important for those of us who support them to acknowledge that they don’t have a magic wand to fix all of their loved one’s problems.
2. **Heroes tend to have no social life.** Most television and movie versions of the origin of Batman (think *Gotham* starring David Mazouz and Ben McKenzie or *Batman Begins* starring Christian Bale and Michael Caine) depict a teen or young adult Bruce Wayne training for his future as Batman. He’s not playing sports, video games or just hanging out with friends.

While heroes like Bruce Wayne don’t socialize much, caregivers who want to be physically and mentally healthy should. Socializing, enjoying hobbies, and not isolating themselves are essential for a caregiver to remain as healthy as possible so he or she can maintain the caregiving role.

1. **Heroes don’t always collaborate well.** Heroes often have difficulty admitting when they need help. For example, Superman tends to carry the weight of the world on his shoulders.

While many caregivers struggle with asking for and accepting help, especially initially, it is absolutely essential for the caregiver’s well-being. No caregiver should exist in a vacuum. The primary caregiver needs to be the captain of the ship with plenty of first mates.

1. **Heroes are invulnerable.** The DC Comics’ website cites invulnerability as a superpower possessed by both Wonder Woman and Superman.

I have never met a caregiver who wasn’t vulnerable. Caregivers give their money, energy and time to care for a loved one, often expecting nothing or very little in return. They are frequently criticized by others in the family for “not doing it right.” They are also quite vulnerable to physical and mental health conditions when they don’t get help with their caregiving duties.

1. **Heroes are secretive and lonely.** Heroes can’t be themselves all the time. Most superheroes are dressing up in costumes and hiding their true identities. Very few people know the real person behind the hero façade.

Caregivers whose costume includes acting like they always have everything together are typically falling apart behind closed doors.

Aim to be a real-life, human, good enough caregiver. Maintain relationships. Socialize. Have realistic expectations of yourself. And most importantly ask for help. Stop trying to be a hero—it’s impossible and unnecessary.

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