

Returning the Favor

Every two weeks or so, I go grocery shopping without my Grandmother. She is not capable of walking around the store for a long time, so that leaves me with the aid of my uncle to go and buy stuff for the house. Going to the store has given me experience in purchasing groceries and seeing the value of a dollar.

Many teenagers do not know the real value of a dollar and are constantly spending money on things they do not need. If I hadn't experienced going to the store and buying groceries, I would have been one of those teenagers. Instead, I've learned how to save a lot more. Rather than going out to eat and wasting money, I'd rather stay home and make something to eat.

Since I was two, my Grandma changed my diapers, fed me and has taken care of me. Now it is time to repay the favor and help her as much as I can to make sure she recovers fully and comes out of her treatments healthy and back to normal.

My Grandmother is teaching me things and she doesn't even know it — and I thank her dearly, from the bottom of my heart.



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GRANDMA'S LESSONS

Learning Responsibility



**Providing eldercare is hard enough for family adults,
but is even tougher for a teenager.
One youth reveals both his challenges and life lessons.**

LEARNING RESPONSIBILITY

ANONYMOUS

I have been taking care of my Grandmother at our home since I was about nine or 10 years old, and I have had to make many difficult decisions since that time.

All my life, my parents haven't been there for me. One thing led to another, and I ended up staying with my Grandmother and eventually taking caring of her.

Diagnosed with Breast Cancer

Throughout my childhood years, my Grandmother developed many different physical and mental disabilities. Just recently she was diagnosed with breast cancer, which has caused a lot of wear and tear on her body. On occasion, my uncle and aunt would come by to visit my Grandma and take her to the doctor's office and to the store. Other than that, I have had no assistance.

Having to watch over my Grandma has made it difficult for me to take part in some activities I'd have liked to be involved in. For example, I started to play soccer when I was about seven. I'd always look toward the bleachers on the sideline, but she wouldn't be there because she wasn't physically able to make it. This had happened many times and eventually I lost interest in soccer, because no one was there to support me when I played. So I started to slack off with sports and I began staying home and taking care of my Grandma.

Even though I was disappointed, dropping out of sports activities turned out to be the greatest decision I have made. It has made me a better person. I see a bigger picture. I've grown up more. As a 16-year-old and a senior in High School, there will be many activities I'm willing to skip in order to look after my Grandmother.

Many people ask me, "What is daily life like for you, taking care of your Grandmother?"

I can start by saying I honestly enjoy it, even though at times I get really frustrated and want to give up. One time, I really wanted to go to the movies with my friends, but my Grandma was really sick. She had just come home from a chemotherapy treatment and she was feeling very fatigued, so I had to stay home and watch her while my friends went to a movie and ate out. That day I wanted to just give up and go out with my friends, but instead I decided to stay home and watch over her.

Although it may seem like a lot of work for an active teenager, I can say from personal experience it is not as bad as it seems. I clean the house on a daily basis and do stuff like washing dishes, vacuuming, mopping and dusting — the same things any normal teenager my age would be doing for chores.

However, I also have to make sure my Grandmother eats and takes her medicine in the morning and afternoon (depending on when she wakes up). It's nothing compared to taking care of a baby, though, because my grandmother is still on her feet and able to do things for herself in certain situations.