

Kathleen Martin is an attorney with O'Donnell, Weiss & Mattei, P.C., and a newspaper columnist for The Mercury, which gave permission for this article to be reprinted.

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Emotions among caregivers, care recipients studied by AARP

Several news sources have reported on the recent AARP Survey about the emotions of caregivers and care recipients. The survey indicates that positive emotions outweigh the negative emotions for all involved in a caregiving situation. AARP is committed to providing resources to assist the more than 40 million family caregivers in our country who provide unpaid short and long term assistance to a parent, spouse, friend or other adult loved one who is in need of assistance. Call 1-877-333-5885 or go to www.aarp.org/caregiving for more information about caregiving resources.

The survey investigated how caregivers and care recipients reacted to the changing roles imposed by the care needs of an adult who had been independent previously. Amy Goyer, AARP Family and Caregiving expert and author of *AARP's Juggling Life, Work and Caregiving*, states that "Changing roles can be difficult to navigate within families, especially when those changes happen quickly with little time to prepare. AARP's caregiving resources help families to prepare for new roles, making the transition less stressful and allowing families to enjoy more quality time together." It seems that most caregivers and care recipients in the survey opted to consider the "quality time" aspect over the negative feelings that sudden changes in caregiving roles often engender.

Some key findings from the survey include:

- For family caregivers, positive emotions such as being pleased about helping a loved one (91%) far outweigh negative feelings. Despite those findings, over half are stressed (51%) or worried (51%), and many are overwhelmed (40%).
- Most care recipients feel a sense of gratitude (89%) along with other positive emotions. However, nearly six in ten (59%) feel less independent since accepting help.
- Preparation seems to be a key factor for caregivers reporting happiness and other positive emotions. Seventy nine percent of those who were prepared for their new role were happier than those who were unprepared. Since 4 out of 10 caregivers report that they were unprepared to take on their role as caregivers, this makes sense that those who were thrust into the new role would be stressed, worried and less happy. Those who were prepared report being happy but of those caregivers, only 16 percent said that they were "very prepared."

To read the full report, visit www.aarp.org/2017roleschangesurvey.com.

Cost of caregiving is not just emotional. However, how one feels about caregiving, the positives rather than the negatives, can make the other "costs" more bearable. An article in *The Wall Street Journal* by Maddy Dychtwald spoke about the surprising benefits and costs of family caregiving. This article supports the AARP survey results in that the caregivers in this survey indicated that caregiving gave "meaning and purpose to their lives." The act of caregiving benefited the caregiver, often as much as those receiving the care. Ms. Dychtwald speaks of a survey her company did with Merrill Lynch, "The Journey of Caregiving: Honor, Responsibility and Financial Complexity." The article also stresses the importance of a family conversation (preparing as mentioned above) including the financial caregiving aspect. Preparation clearly results in a better experience for all involved.