

QUALITY

Living in a Long Term Care facility, I don't determine the quality of my life. It is shaped by **them**, forces external to me, the regulators of the LTC institution. But **they** can aid the shaping of life's quality – or they can obstruct my quality of living.

At eighty-six, I'm on the final journey of my life. Disabled, I'm in need of a caring hand to grasp as I travel this path. Living in a Long Term Care facility, the hand may be available, but not ready to grip. My journey – the quality of my remaining years - is in the hands of a caregiver

A person lives in an Assisted Living Facility because s/he can't do things for themselves. One lives in a Nursing Home because s/he is fragile or disabled and helpless. One lives in a Memory Care Center because s/he can't remember, or think or walk or talk..

Despite the helplessness, I think the desire of elders in Long Term Care facilities is to retain their sense of dignity, purpose, and value as an individual person.

In order for meaning to materialize, it needs to inhere in the attitude of the owners and administrators of the Long Term Care facility. They are the Providers who enable purposeful, supportive living. They are the force that allows me to value me. They lead those who assist the handicapped, enable the disabled, think for the non-cognitive. A Provider deploys the caregivers who execute the spirit of the Provider.

The caregivers are the front line of contact with those who need care. However temporary the relationship, their lives conjoin with those elders. We residents of LTC facilities have been loaned to the caregivers to provide the care that ensures the quality of our final years.

Some responsibility! Is the Caregiver aware of this transcendental obligation?

If you're a caregiver, you don't just insert a hearing aid for a hearing-deprived resident, you don't just give a shower to a manually disabled resident, you don't just wipe a totally dependent resident. In short, you do more than assist a resident perform the Activities of Daily Living: you become the human bridge that carries a trace of dignity to the helpless; that empathizes with their inability and uncertainty.

But building the bridge of empathy is not the caregiver's job alone. This obligation belongs to the owners, administrators, and managers of Long Term Care facilities. They conceive the vision, design the structure, create the processes for operating the ALF, Nursing Home, or Memory Center which will enable the old, the fragile, the disabled – to write their own narratives to close out their lives – with quality.

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