

THE ELDERCARE RESCUE GUIDE



13 Must-Have Survival Truths

By Carol-Ann Hamilton

How synchronistic it was to run into you the other day...



Hardly did I think we'd meet up at the mall! But there it was.

You were taking advantage of **PRECIOUS FEW stolen moments** to accomplish what felt like a million-and-one errands while your impossible aging parents were being taken care of by a kind neighbour.

What a RELIEF it was to get out from under their grip for a few hours!

Don't I know it!

I'm only just now in the process of regaining my world after four unremitting years at especially my ultra-stubborn father's hands.

You, on the other hand, remain squarely in the fray of **THE MOST gruelling chapter of life apart from an infant's relentless needs.**

That is, if you have **TRULY OBSTINATE FOLKS.** In our short catch-up, I got every sense you do!!!

For, you were asking me:

*Did you **battle vocally** just short of actual blows over gently proposing a new life-chapter to your headstrong elderly folks?*

*Did you meet **unquantifiable resistance** at daring to even hint the defiant duo leave their soothingly-familiar decades-old residence – or at least entertain household caregivers – given their progressive inability to perform basic daily tasks?*

*Did you apply **Super-Human power** to achieve even the smallest strides with your recalcitrant pair – and yet your all-out capacity came nowhere close to filling their **bottomless pit**?*

Over coffee, I answered a resounding YES!!!



Thanks for agreeing to spend a few minutes sipping a caffeinated beverage together. (Though, if the truth be told, we would have preferred it to be alcoholised, right??)

I sincerely appreciate the sacrifices that will be entailed in taking additional time for YOU.

When you get home, you will be **GRILLED** with all manner of questions about why you were so long out of the house – not unlike a teenager who just broke curfew!

“Where were you???” “What were you doing???” “Why weren’t you here with us, attending to our every requirement???”

As if you don’t already do this practically 24 x 7 – and you don’t even live with them!!!

It’s OK. You can admit it felt **FREEING** to be released from what is otherwise a jail for this short respite!

Between caring for your difficult aged...and a host of competing priorities that may well encompass...a full-time job or self-employment... significant other...children...grand-children... home and/or car maintenance...your own health...and **TONS** more...



It’s not a stretch to admit there’s many a day **you feel totally burdened and exhausted.**

That’s why if I had only one thing to say, it would be this...

1 – YOU need some extreme self-care – NOW!!!

During this excruciating chapter – MORE THAN EVER before in your life – YOU MUST, MUST, MUST practice extreme self-care.

Now, before you balk...

This term does NOT, NOT, NOT equate to being selfish – much as I have already been aggressively attacked (if you can believe it) for suggesting its value.



Rather, nurturing yourself is akin to donning your own oxygen mask first in an airline emergency.

Contending with Un-cope-able Parents is unequivocally taxing. Exactly when you're drained, you must recharge.

Pay special attention to what brings you pleasure during this exceptionally wit-testing life phase. For me, it has been leisurely bubble baths. Whatever it is for you, go do it!

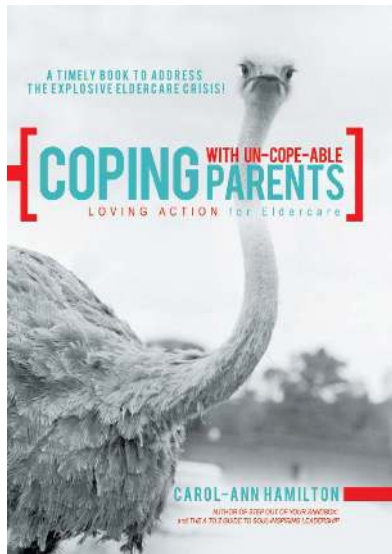
If you don't, you will be completely spent – physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually – on the heels of extending any time with them – whether measured in minutes or hours.

This will mean you have nothing left over to give; such a state serves no one.

Coaches Training Institute-educated and in practice since 1999, I can tell you:

Self-care is not a luxury but a necessity.

Here's what I want to say next...



Here's why I can **CONFIDENTLY** claim to realize precisely what you're **STRUGGLING** with.

Allow me to describe myself as **the only child of excruciating parents**. For, it is ZERO exaggeration to state that **EVERYTHING I've encountered at the hands of my unspeakably-challenging mother and father across 50+ years** equipped me to pen my fourth book, *Coping with Un-cope-able Parents: LOVING ACTION for Eldercare*.

In fact, I **coined the term "un-cope-able"** in a fit of despair to express the degree of "impossible" I've suffered throughout my formative years and into a goodly portion of adulthood.

As a result, what you **WON'T RECEIVE** from me is:

- **CONVENTIONAL ADVICE** – there already exist plenty of pamphlets, booklets and reports outlining how you "should" interact with your aging parents
- **TRITE QUESTIONS** – in the form of: "Why don't you?" and "Have you tried?"
- **TIRED PLATITUDES** – such as: "There, there, dear, you just need to be patient and understand what your poor elders are going through."

All these **TYPICAL** offerings can be boiled down to... "*Just suck it up!*"

Much as I **ABHOR** the phrase, **that's what you get when you rely on self-nominated sages who haven't spent any realistic time "in the trenches"**. Are you kidding?

If had a few extra minutes, here are 3 more tips...

2 – Believe it or not, the agony **WILL** end.

To be honest, don't you ask yourself countless times a day: How on Earth am I going to survive the pig-headed duo?

Truly, it's OK to wonder "who's going to go first – them or me?" Even if decades separate your age groups, the question hangs in the balance...



You **LONG** to get un-stuck from feeling like you're the soggy middle in an old burnt (out) triple-decker grilled cheese sandwich – and that's no bologna!

No matter how grievous your circumstances appear some days, there are absolute ways to prevail with intractable elders.

It's just that you can't even find a shred of trust that such nirvana is available to you.

I GET it! At the anguished height of my father's unstoppable negativity, I doubted my very survival. Yet, I succeeded. You will, too.

However, **I soulfully believe you need to acknowledge that the care of Un-cope-able Parents is nothing short of an utterly fatiguing marathon.** You feel like you can barely pant your way to the "finish line".

This brings me to my next point...

**"Just when you cannot imagine taking another step,
you will find the strength."**

**(Based on my 250,000 hours' experience at 24 hours a day X
365 days a year X 30 years enduring Unbelievably-Difficult
Parents)**

3 – It’s OK to feel ALL your feelings.

Forget sanctimonious societal messages that subtly or covertly criticize you for not interpreting gruelling eldercare a privilege!

Indeed, I’ve already come across articles that describe cleaning out a father’s colostomy bag as “fulfilling”. Further, it was judgmentally suggested that any adult child who does not consider eldercare “affirming” must be WRONG.

I say – really??? Remember, we’re not talking pleasant, cooperative folks here. We’re talking the unapologetically defiant!

Have these people walked a mile in your lead-heavy shoes?

While ultimately encouraging a level head (and heart), it’s 100 percent OK to experience so-called “negative” feelings such as anger. For gosh sake, I’ve penned a countervailing article that accords complete permission to deeply resent your parents.

Did I say that out loud? Yes.



While not my stance today, **I submit resolving past relationship dynamics requires raw honesty.** If you come from a dysfunctional family-of-origin, I respectfully offer that **wound-clearing depends upon your willingness to confront those still-damaged places within.**

You need not demonstrate Mother Teresa or Papal dedication to prove you are a good son or daughter!!!

Did you know stressed caregivers experience a 63 percent higher mortality rate, compared to non-caregivers of similar age?

No wonder you feel such tension!

4 – QTIP saves the day.



QTIP stands for: Quit Taking It Personally.

Has it ever occurred to you that your folks’ “naughty” behaviors aren’t necessarily about you?

I realize it often feels like they’re taking out all their fury and frustration and downright crotchety attitudes DIRECTLY upon YOU.

As a result, you frequently have the sense your teeth are being ground to their roots while clamping down on what you’d really wish with all your might to say!!! And that’s just in one phone call!!!

Might I offer a short word of caution? It certainly took a while to come to me...

If you’re giving over your attention to what you want to say, you may miss some important data along the way.

You know how stealthy your folks can get. As I regularly reassure participants in my corporate Communication Skills programs, you won’t forget your points by the time the other person finishes their sentence. This is a typical concern.

It accounts for: interrupting the other; drawing false assumptions; and myriad bad habits.

Listen first and then speak!

Could your ridiculous parents’ behaviours be caused by a fear of dying? The unknown beckons.

They may just be resisting the vulnerability.

I appreciate the time we've shared so far!

With every fibre of my being, **I hope you're starting to feel even a small measure of relief.**

If you're starting to say and/or experience:

- *"Finally! Someone on the Planet who 'gets' what it's like to deal with my unappreciative relatives."*
- *"Am I a secret brother or sister to this woman, because otherwise how could she possibly know our family so well"?*
- *Uproarious laughter in recognition of your own challenging circumstances...*

I will begin to feel my "work" here is underway.

Thanks for agreeing to continue our dialogue!

May I add another five tips to your coping with Un-cope-able Parents Toolkit?

You declare: *"By all means."* Loudly and clearly – at that! Excellent!

They're based on some of the most frequently-asked questions I've received from desperate Sandwich Generation caregivers in exactly your predicament.



For sure, no stone remains unturned in terms of the tactics I've explored. It's like an **A to Z** of failed "experiments" in my bag!

Nowadays, I'm genuinely grateful no victory with my sometimes-horrendous aged arrived easily. Without such trial, I may never have reached the **down-to-earth and innovative insights** which will actually aid you.

5 – How many more hours-long repetitions will I endure???

Raise your hand if you put up with hour-upon-hour of diatribes having nothing to do with the immediate subject matter at hand from one or both your long-winded folks...

What's that I see? Both your arms and legs are in the air!



If your experience is anything like ours, do you have a parent like “Bill the Truck Driver”? Oh my goodness...

Yes, that is an actual photo of my school teacher Dad (and eventually principal) in the 1940's. During summer vacations, he proudly drove trucks carrying engine mounts for the Lancaster Bomber plane into a local Ontario, Canada factory to support WWII efforts. What a laudable contribution.

However, citing those experiences 50 years' later in 2010 to justify why he's “got a thing or two to teach that guy about driving who doesn't even own a vehicle” when he failed the requisite provincial car re-licensing tests at age 88, that's when it became a little tiresome.

Family members coined the bang on phrase, “Did I tell you...Yes!!!...Well, anyway...” I'm hooting!

When we were subjected to his stories for the zillionth time (I exaggerate) we truly wanted to scream! Still, “Pa” marched right on without missing a beat...

Be gracious. Allow your folks to “drone on” about glory days.

Without their tired stories, they have no “identity”.

It's their way of drawing remaining shreds of life force.

6 – Why is so much psyching up necessary?

It's perfectly understandable that the mere thought of your obstinate folks would make your eyes roll in their sockets.

No one would question when you're dealing with intractable elders that you would want to tear out your hair strand by strand before, during and/or after interacting with them.

Instead of focusing upon how frustrating they are, may I suggest you reframe this chosen thought pattern?

For, if you allow simply thinking about your parents to victimize you to that extent, you're going to be in deep trouble long before you enter their company.



Instead of focusing upon your legitimate annoyance, how about looking upon phone calls or visits like business?

If you were getting ready for a critical boss or client meeting, you wouldn't even think of going in ill-prepared. You would operate on facts. You would go in confident.

You know you have my profound empathy, right?

Nonetheless, I wish to offer that eye-balling rolling and hair-yanking eventually connote a Poor Me attitude. Holding onto such perspectives will not aid you in the long term.

Just as you're a proactive professional at work, so too do you want to be in your dealings with loved ones.

Redefine the term "psych-up".
Think of your strategy as: Preparation & Readiness.

7 – Is there anything I can do to protect myself?

It's no surprise you feel like at any given moment you will lose all your accumulated knowledge, wisdom, experience and skill because your elders manage (for the millionth time) to destroy your capability due to their mindsets or actions.

If I may say, this one is an unfounded fear. You know what FEAR stands for: False Evidence Appearing Real.

No one can pinch you off from the competent person you are NOW without your permission. In the past, that may have been the case. Not today!

Whenever the coach in me hears the phrase, “feel like”, my ears perk up. For, it marks evidence of an old belief system catching hold of you.

If anything, they need the parenting. Like babies, you must be present to their needs – without sacrificing your own in the process.



At the same time, I'm all for techniques borrowed from my Reiki practice like grounding myself by imagining roots growing out my feet as well as forming an invisible protective bubble around my energetic aura.

As we used to say in anticipation of paternal interactions: “Shields up!”

**Place boundaries around visits.
Don't bite off more than can be chewed at one time.**

8 – What do you mean by “surrender and release”?

Trust me, I “get it”!

How exasperating to attempt every available device known to human-kind and yet you make zero headway in influencing your pig-headed elders to see your point of view.

The perseverance and fortitude required are incalculable!



May I quote from Doreen Virtue’s guidebook to *Healing with the Angels: Oracle Cards* to address this concern?

When you hold on tightly to a part of your life that’s not working (i.e., your usual ways of striving to cope with Un-cope-able Parents), it has no room to heal.

To countermand the doggedness we adult children can fall into as part of an obsession to achieve our opinionated outcomes around aging parents, **strive to shift into what coach Martha Beck in**

Oprah’s magazine calls “loving detachment”.

This term refers to caring what happens, but so much that you lose your sense of balance.

**Try not to control the outcome of your troubling situation.
Letting go is an unrecognized source of power.**

9 – Timing is everything.

Don't give up!

A valid suggestion that might seem irreconcilable at one point can break through wondrously in another moment – even with headstrong parents.



Evidence my 86-year-old father's obstinacy regarding his "hoarders on steroids" home. I swear this is a 100% real picture of his CHOSEN living circumstances before he allowed me to intervene.

The filth and mess were absolutely at cause for never finding "The Stolen Garage Door Opener". At least, we solved "The Missing Glasses Episode"!

To find out more, you will want to coach with me beyond a short mall visit ☺

For now, I can tell you when my mother passed at 89 he suddenly opened to my indoor cleaning and garden support.

No longer did he yell, "Don't touch my stuff!!!" every time I tried to bring any semblance of order to his environment.

They don't say patience is a heavenly trait for nothing!

Progress with Un-cope-able Parents is measured inch by inch.

Do you have time for 4 remaining insights? Glad you do!

10 - Bottom-line, what doesn't work with Un-cope-ables?

STOP doing any of these behaviours
IMMEDIATELY!!!

- Abdicate (your needs)
- Beg
- Cajole
- Demand
- Explain (logically)
- Force
- Grovel
- Humiliate
- Insult
- Jump (up and down in frustration)
- "Kill" (as in, wanting to kill them some days)
- Lie
- Manipulate
- Name-call
- Over-ride
- Plead
- Quarrel
- Retaliate
- Shout
- Train (as in, educate)
- Undermine
- Vanquish
- Wrong
- X-acerbate
- Yell
- Zeal (demonstrate)

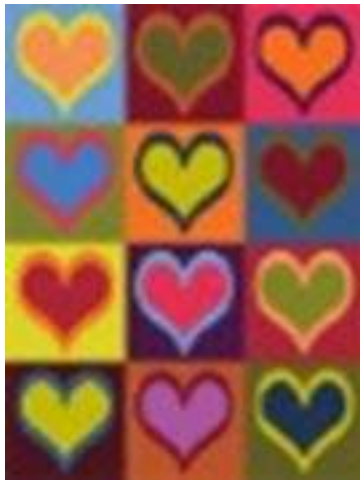


11 – So, what DOES work???

Just as standard answers don't work for the truly insufferable, so too don't any of the negative A to Z tactics you may have experimented with in the past.

How far have your begging, manipulation and even logic gotten you to-date? Not so much, right?

After ALL the trial and error – over time (and not in one day) – I finally arrived at The 12 KEYS to COPING.



The 6 LOVING Attitudes represent a state of being. Rest assured, we're not talking syrupy!!!

Instead, these are the mindsets I know will allow you to remain centered during the most crazy-making of exchanges.

Charging into doing without reflection won't generate desired outcomes. **If anything, ill-considered deeds can quickly make your horrific situation worse.**

As we master the qualities we choose to embody toward our non-compliant elders, **we bump up considerably our potential for success with the 6 Focused ACTION's.**

As children like to ask, how do you eat an elephant? Of course, the answer is "one bite at a time". It's the same with Un-cope-able Parents!

All productive action must be preceded by deliberate intent.

12 – Believe it or not, there are hidden gifts.



There I am, delivering my Daddy's eulogy with (I hope) grace and dignity on September 22, 2012.

I've emerged considerably **STRONGER** as a result of wrestling my inner Gremlins to the ground and by facing this personal "Hell".

Embedded within the back- and spirit-breaking hardships, I shall always remember engaging in **moving conversations with my declining father that could bring me to tears even now**. It's abundantly clear the man was using those visits to impart an unforgettable legacy.

As you can well imagine by now, I sighed in **BITTER WEARINESS** over having to re-enter a grievous household fray I'd hoped to escape forever as my parents' various health challenges compounded with advancing years.

After dealing with my father's alcoholism and my mother's mental illness for almost half of my 56 years on planet Earth, I was **DONE**.

Since, I've **HEALED** a significant part of my past and arrived at "completion" regarding the maternal and paternal transitions of 2010 to 2012.

By NO means did this happen overnight.

Rather, it took two to three years of **INTENSE** inner work to shift my fundamental feelings away from **DISGUST and LOATHING** to greater **COMPASSION**.

Learning to cope is a process of constant discovery.

You never know when a miracle will occur.

13 – You’re not alone anymore.

Because you took the time to download my Survival Guide, I know you to be someone serious about making a considerably huge difference in your eldercare journey for the benefit of all concerned.

You’ve arrived at exactly the right place at precisely the right time.



Multiple Sandwich Generation members experience your despair.

In Canada in 2009, there were 4.7 million seniors (or about 13.9% of the population). Between 2031 and 2036, that number is expected to climb to 10.9 million (or about 25% of the projected population).

World-wide, there exist burgeoning aging populations from the U.S. to Japan.

Already now, pretty much every facet of society is ill-prepared. Wait until the Baby Boomer bulge stretches the crisis to epidemic proportions. For that and other reasons, my follow-up book will be called ***Coping with Un-cope-able Systems: ADVOCACY for Eldercare.***

On a more personal level, if there were a few messages I’d want to leave you with, they’d be:

You CAN see through your nerve-wracking parents’ transitions with forgiveness.

You CAN navigate your elderly relationships so the highest and best for all concerned is attained.

You CAN transform your past, present and future.

Want to know how?

My Dear Sandwich -Generation Caregiver Kindred Spirit,
YOU have my earnest empathy and unbridled support.

For sure, **YEARN** is the perfect word to describe my commitment to **NEVER** yield in supporting you through your travails.

If I can save even a few of you my anguish, my sense of fulfillment will be deep.

Your best next-step to learn from my hard-won lessons will be to contact me at spirit-unlimited@rogers.com or (905) 822-2503 for a Clarity Session by phone.

I guarantee our voyage together will be one from
DESPERATION to **INSPIRATION** to **HOPE**.

Compassion and Success to you!



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