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**PUBLISHER'S MESSAGE****You can't always get what you want...**

I'd like my mother to be well, agile, able to speak and out of her wheelchair. If I had my way she'd be able to go to the toilet on her own, participate more in family get-togethers and be more independent. She would also be far more able to enjoy the care and attention she receives from her long-time companion, Don—who worries about her and does whatever he can to make her every day just a little bit brighter. But the reality is that's just not happening, and after 10 years I have resigned myself to the fact that I can't always get what I want.

Does that mean I'm giving up? Heck no! On the contrary, it means that I'm even more determined to get my mum the best care possible. I'm just not as stressed as I used to be or as frantic. That being said, perhaps part of my resolve comes from the fact that during the time I've been my mum's power of attorney and caregiver, I've learned to appreciate the care system and work with its strengths and limitations. The wheels do move slowly at times, especially when it comes to arranging specialists and tests, and it breaks my heart to see her suffer. Nevertheless, her care team and I do manage to get her the medical care and attention she needs in a timely fashion.

I've also come to respect my mum and her wishes. She has the right to choose and refuse. I don't even get as embarrassed as I used to by her outbursts and meltdowns—there's usually a reason for them, even if we don't always understand what it is.

Those "bad news" phone calls can still come at any time—when I'm at the grocery store, a restaurant, work or home. But by now, I feel like I've heard most of it before. Maybe it's mum on the line because she's frustrated and needs me to talk to her caregivers. (No problem.) Perhaps it's the doctor's office with test results or an appointment date that is still a few months away. (No panic. Just lobby for an earlier time and make sure the test results end up at the right place.) Or, sometimes it's the dentist, searching for the permission form for fixing mum's cavities and the recommended extraction. (The nice lady who's calling just doesn't understand that mum is refusing.)

Often, there isn't anything I can do right away. Instead I listen, take notes and try to figure out a best "next step." Patience, I've learned, is the ultimate virtue with eldercare issues. When it's urgent, it's urgent; when it's not, it's much easier to go with the flow and realize that what I think may not be the most important consideration.

*Caroline*  
**Caroline Tapp-McDougall**  
Publisher



*The Complete Canadian Eldercare Guide* is full of good ideas for caregiving. To order a copy, visit your local bookstore or [www.solutionsmagazine.ca](http://www.solutionsmagazine.ca).

**“Nobody gets to live life backwards. Look ahead, that is where your future lies.”**

*Ann Landers*

