



How Do You View Your Parents?

When dealing with parents who are frequently forgetful, unappreciative, critical or challenging in any way, it's easy to become stressed the minute you have to interact with them — or even when you think about interacting with them!

You can easily end up seeing your parents through a negative lens, and when that negative lens becomes a permanent thing, you get stuck with the consequence of perpetual guilt, resentment and bitterness: **stress!**

So while I understand completely that they are *really and truly* presenting you with some challenging issues, in order to **take better care of you** while caring for your parents, you need to think about **how you label your parents**.

In all likelihood your situation is one of these two people described most often when people tell me about the stress of caring for their parents:

A. If your parents used to be independent, capable, self-sufficient people, and now they are dependent, less capable, and not self-sufficient, **this change is going to be very hard on them**. It isn't easy to be in a role of receiving care and being dependent. Not everyone adapts to this change in lifestyle with ease and grace. Some of them “go down fighting every step of the way!”

B. If, on the other hand, your parents are used to being waited on, and have always been demanding, then it is a style to which they are accustomed. And while on some level you are likely used to it as well, that doesn't mean you aren't getting tired of it! As they become less able to do things for themselves, **they will be very comfortable making more and more demands on you**.

Either way, the very first thing to do – always – is to **check in with them and ASK** how things are for them and what, if anything, they would like you to do differently. Don't assume anything! Let them know that you are making an effort to understand things from their point of view, and to help them in ways that really **FEEL helpful to them**.

Also be sure to explain to them that, while you'll do the best you can, you won't always be able to do exactly what they would prefer. This way at the very least **they will feel more heard** — and you won't be simply reacting to what you think are their irritating ways! You'll have some more clues about the reasons behind their actions, and be better able to absorb the things they say and do under stress without getting upset yourself.

Take a moment to write down your answers the questions provided.

1. How would you describe your parent's personality before and now?

2. How would you describe your relationship with your parents before they needed care?

3. What do your parents need in terms of care? Are they able to tell you what they need and want?

4. What support do you need for yourself if/when you cannot meet their demands?
