

Karen Steadman

Faces of Caregiving - United Kingdom



Karen Steadman juggles her work, relationships and finances to care for her loved ones. Her mother Pauline was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease 14 years ago. In the past five years Pauline's mobility and movement started to get progressively worse.

Karen was watching her mother get frailer as she got older, and Karen had to take on the role of one of her carers. However, her mother felt strongly about keeping her independence.

"It made me feel physically ill to see my mom trying to be independent while she was trying to cope with the symptoms of Parkinson's disease."

As time progressed, Karen's stepfather, Roy, who had skin cancer, began to experience symptoms of dementia and was suddenly hospitalized for an E.coli infection.

"Roy didn't want professional carers in the house and felt they could manage themselves. However, this meant that they both became more dependent on me and my brother to help them."

Karen's brother Neil shares caring responsibilities for their parents, especially their father Barry. Barry lives a comparatively active lifestyle, however has become more emotionally dependent on his children as he became older. Neil helps Barry with day-to-day tasks and takes him to doctor's appointments.

"Although my brothers and I are different, we are a team when it comes to caring for our parents."

Karen used to be a teacher but juggling her home life and work became too difficult. She had to leave her job in a primary school two years ago after experiencing bouts of depression, which resulted in ongoing anxiety.

"I've been having treatment for my depression, including Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), meditation and self-management techniques. I am the master of turning a negative into a positive, which has been really helpful."

She now works shifts in the local Post Office and Roy and Pauline are in a care home now. Karen fits in visiting her parents around her work hours, which can vary every day.





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Not only does Karen look after her parents, she also lives with her partner Bryan, one of her two daughters and her two sons. Both of her sons experience anxiety. To add to her caring duties, Karen looks after her grandchild once a week.

“ My best asset is being caring, loving and nurturing. I wouldn't ever want to think I hadn't done my best or done more – I do feel quite sad having to look after my parents, but I try not to have any regrets. ”

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