

A Cast of Caregivers: Celebrity Stories to Help You Prepare to Care

sherri snelling

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Sherri Snelling starts off her book, *A Cast of Caregivers*, with the facts: sixty-five million Americans have cared for loved ones who are disabled, ill, or dying. So it seems surprising that there's not more information out there on what it takes to give care, what kind of toll it has on the caregiver, and what happens once it's over. That's what Snelling delves into in her five hundred-page book: first offering anecdotes and then discussing death, dying, and caring for the caregiver in the aftermath.

The anecdotes she chooses are quite fascinating because they all tell the stories of celebrities who have suffered as caregivers, and who reflect on their experiences and offer advice. We hear from Joan Lunden, a television broadcaster who acts as caregiver for her mother, and Sylvia Mackey, wife of the NFL player John Mackey. Alan and David Osmond offer their input about their experiences with multiple sclerosis and actress Alana Stewart divulges how she cared for her long-time friend Farrah Fawcett, who battled a rare form of cancer. Using the stories of these stars is sobering because it's easy to imagine that their celebrity lives are untainted—when, in fact, the opposite is true. Money they may have, but cash doesn't buy you good health.

Snelling spends the majority of her book discussing the role of caregiving, the stress involved, the support available, and the consequences it often entails. She touches on end-of-life wishes, how caregivers can start readapting to the world after their caregiving is no longer needed, and how unprepared most of us are to face the finality of death and dying. Her lengthy book is peppered with lines from Hollywood movies, for which she clearly has a penchant, but also filled with suggestions of helpful resources such as books and websites.

A Cast of Caregivers is an eye-opening book that will be a great help and comfort to the many caregivers in American society. It acknowledges their ceaseless work and the hardships it often involves, validates their efforts, and applauds their unpaid hours. It's worthwhile for those in the caregiving situation themselves, and for those who know they will be someday soon.

LAUREN KRAMER (February 1, 2013)

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