Rosie Roessler, a Caregiver Who Makes Every Moment Count



The Roessler family.

osie Roessler of Lauderhill, Florida, knows something about making every moment count. "There are moments which mark your life. Moments when you realize nothing will ever be the same and time is suddenly divided into two parts: before this and after this," said the 30-year-old mother of three.

That moment happened two and a half years ago when Rosie's 41-year-old husband was diagnosed with young-onset Parkinson's disease. Now with all the demands on Rosie's time and emotions—juggling a full-time job, her husband's needs, and multiple kids—every day is a struggle. With such a stuffed schedule, she admits that it is not possible to feel happy and positive all the time.

There is a positive, because life has become better than before. My husband and I are even closer. Now the best part of my day is coming home to him. Parkinson's has given us something that I believe we would never have had without it: simple unconditional love, she said.

"I love my husband, but I hate Parkinson's. The feelings of helplessness are overwhelming, and nothing is worse than watching him suffer while knowing I can't fix it," Rosie said. But, she adds that her desire to raise Parkinson's awareness is a continual source of motivation.

"It's 100 percent normal to feel like you just can't take it anymore, especially after you go for days being a single mother and a caregiver to your husband because there has been a recent medication change that is taking everything out of him," Rosie said. Instead, she has learned to look at life from a different perspective. These days, she says she lives by the motto, not every day is perfect, but there are perfect moments in every day.

So instead of facing reality, Rosie is now creating reality, moment by moment. "I know that we have an uphill climb fighting this battle, but when I feel like I can't make it through the day, I break it down hour by hour, and when even that is too much, minute by minute. The great thing about life is we all get a do-over every morning. And that's really kind of amazing," she said.



"It was good to read the experience of someone else and know I am not alone with these frustrations. It's an emotional roller coaster watching my husband struggle." ~ Julie

ROSIE'S TIPS FOR LIVING IN THE MOMENT

- **Know that you are unique.** Never compare your experience as a caregiver to someone else's. This gives you the choice of how you want to live.
- **Slow down.** Focus on the present moment and the simple things in everyday life that bring you joy. Pay attention to feelings that come up and, without guilt, acknowledge them.
- Be thankful. Appreciate the fact that you actually have the health and strength to care for your loved one. Take stock of how your relationship with your loved one may have deepened.

To find an NPF Chapter with a Caregiver Support Group near you, please visit www.parkinson.org/search or call NPF's Helpline 1-800-4PD-INFO (473-4636).