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PARENTS (Continued)

Parkersburg, W. Va.

I quit school at 16 to support my widowed mother. She was untrained for special work, and a heart condition prevented her from doing housework. I married at 21 with the understanding that Mother would live with us.

We never apologized when we went to visit friends, but we sometimes offered to drop Mother at her friends to visit while we were gone. Suggestions such as this help older people feel less neglected.

My husband and I always talked things over, and if either of our mothers got on our nerves we were not afraid to say so. It really worked well.

Having Mother around sometimes made things a little uncomfortable, but she more than made up for it by baby-sitting after the children came. The idea of children resenting their grandparents is most often a fabrication. I hope my children will miss me as much as they have missed their grandmother.

Some cases of older people living with families are impossible, but that was certainly not true with us.—M.S.C.

Pocatello, Idaho

People of any age should be where they want to be rather than where they have to be. They should be with those in whom they find understanding and tolerance, and with whom they share a common interest.

In my opinion it's a poor father or mother who does for his child only because he expects something in return, and not because of the love in his heart for that child.—Mrs. Eleanor Habeich

Altoona, Pa.

One of the best things our parents ever did for my brother, sisters, and me was to invite our grandparents to live with us. I was 11 when my father's father came, and he stayed for 16 years. Both of my mother's parents joined our family when I was 13, and my grandmother, the last to go, lived with us for 21 years.

It would be wrong to pretend that we were always happy. There were many trials for my parents in keeping a three-generation family running smoothly. But the good the old folks brought far outweighed whatever "trouble" they may have caused.

In addition to their help with the housework, there is no way to measure the balm that a loving grandmother can give to a teen-ager's aching heart when "nobody understands." And who can entertain youngsters as well as Grandfather with his gentle and often hilarious tales of the good old days? Who has the patience and time that Grandfather has to teach a lad the knack of handling hammer and saw? Or, when it comes to sewing and baking, who is a better teacher than Grandmother?

All of us loved them dearly, and our parents had the added joy of knowing they were taking good care of those who had cared so lovingly for them.—Mrs. Sarah Chamberlin

Lakeland, Fla.

My mother is 68 and my stepfather is 82. They each get an old-age pension of \$54 a month. How can a couple live on that? If they make any money it is deducted, and by the time the bills are paid, there isn't enough for them to live on.

They had about 100 chickens when my mother started to get her pension. A welfare worker came out and told them that they had to get rid of all but 10 of them. Obviously, they were not getting rich off the chickens, but it gave them something to do. They sold eggs from the house, and that kept them in touch with people. Usually they broke even or made a few pennies, but at night they went to bed tired with the feeling that they had accomplished something, and they didn't have to ask anything of anyone. Now they have nothing, and they get very depressed. When I think back about how happy they used to be to scrimp along, I wonder.

I don't want more money for them, but I think if the Government would lift some of its restrictions and let older people like my folks have something to occupy their time and make them feel independent, they would be happier. They don't want to get rich, but just to keep busy, and it isn't right for others to tell them what they can do and how much they can make.—Mrs. Evelyn Golan

Milan, Ohio

One measure of a culture is its attitude toward the old, the sick, the handicapped, and the indigent. In certain ethnic groups, where survival is hard, it is taken as a matter of course that their aged people will be put somewhere to die or be killed. In others, where life is more gracious, old people are revered above all others—tended, cherished, and sought out for their wise counsel.

Where do we fall in this scale of values? I suspect that most of our present generation, having been reared to expect their wants to be readily supplied because of the great wealth of our country, and being cushioned against learning compassion through suffering or failure, have grown self-centered. They want their parents to have everything without sacrifice to themselves. They are untrained in service and giving, yet they're distressed to see anyone deprived of anything.

The result of this ambivalence is confusion and guilt. Why, for example, should the Mary B. in your recent article suffer in health through caring for her feeble father-in-law? A nurse could care for a wardful of old men and not suffer—and live a full personal life besides. But she wouldn't be torn apart by the guilty sense of "I ought to but I don't want to," and "I'm ashamed to admit to myself that I don't want to when I ought to."

It seems that the rearing of young ones in our culture demands more emphasis on compassion, doing for others, and "putting up with" all ages and temperaments in people—in short, on each one's giving more of himself without expecting reward.—Mrs. Dorothy Russell

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