

When you descend from your Mount Sinai-that is the steps of the hospital, the doctor's office, or your own house-having received the word or the recognition that you have been thrust into the role of a care giver, you will need to have in hand the Ten Commandments of Care Giving.

Almost no one starts out to be a care giver. Sure there are exceptions when the wounded warrior returns and the hometown sweet heart or partner accepts him/her in the condition now found. Also, an increasing number of people have stepped forward to care or help to care for aging or ill individuals. Most of us, however, did not volunteer for the job and have little or no preparation for what is ahead. Thus, know your Ten Commandments of Care Giving.

- I. Thou Shalt Be Cheerful
- II. Thou Shalt Not Complain
- III. Thou Shalt Be Affectionate
- IV. Thou Shalt Bestow Compliments
- V. Thou Shalt Be An Advocate
- VI. Thou Shalt Not Raise the Issue of Death
- VII. Thou Shalt Obtain the Living Will
- VIII. Thou Shalt Take Care of Yourself
- IX. Thou Shalt Communicate
- X. Thou Shalt Give Thanks

Montgomery Law Office

James R. Montgomery
Jaime L. Rebkovich

Attorneys and Counselors at Law

1901 South Main Street
Suite 3
Blacksburg, VA 24060

Phone: (540) 552-1663

Fax: (540) 552-1638

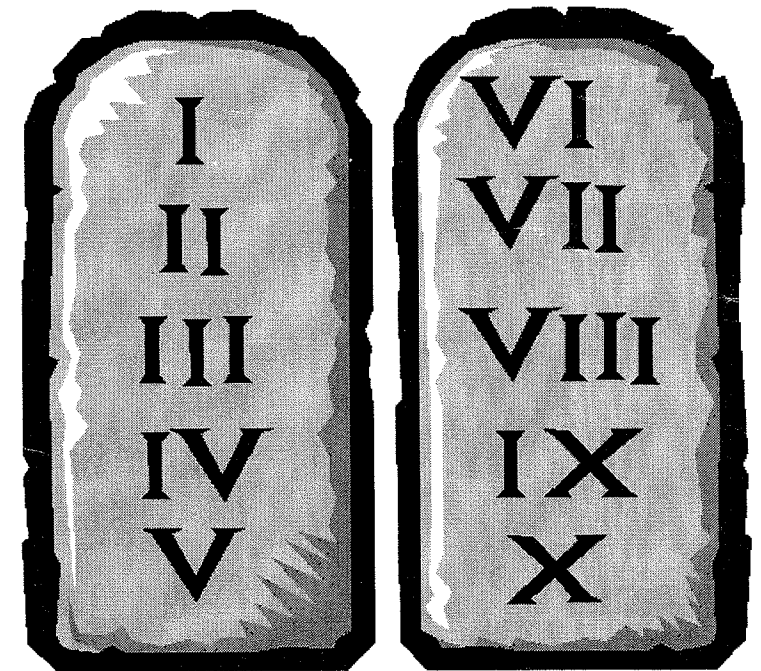
Email: Info@JRMattorney.com

Website: JRMattorney.com

James R. Montgomery, Ph.D, J.D., attorney

Practices Estate and Elder Law in Southwest Virginia. He served for over eight months as a care giver until the death of his wife ended this era of his life.

The Ten Commandments of Care Giving



By James R. Montgomery

I. Thou Shalt be Cheerful

The afflicted one needs you to be cheerful and optimistic. It is not your role to express doubt of recovery, any fear of any long term consequences, the possibility of crippling implications, or death. As the weeks pass into months, this commandment becomes more difficult to perform and also more important.

II. Thou Shalt Not Complain

Do not complain to the afflicted one or friends of your own ills, doubts, or troubles. When asked how you are doing, you are always "doing fine." It is the afflicted one who is the center of attention. Keep your problems out of this equation. You will find one or more care givers who are or have been actively involved with an afflicted one. Blow off your steam with such persons, and seek the advice and counsel of these fellow workers who have been there and done that.

III. Thou Shalt Be Affectionate

Remain, or become affectionate. Hold hands, exchange kisses, give the affectionate pat (being careful not to touch where it hurts). The afflicted one needs your love-show it.

IV. Thou Shalt Bestow Compliments

Whenever possible bestow complements on the afflicted one. Comment on the hair, the dressing gown, the facial color, the twinkle in the eye. The afflicted one wants to feel good-find a way to help that feeling to exist.

V. Thou Shalt Be An Advocate

Too often the afflicted person is too ill or otherwise occupied to notice or worry about the care being given by the doctor, the hospital, or the health service provider. You need to make out a list of questions and or concerns and to see that these items are addressed or understood by all the players in this activity. You must assume the responsibility to watch medications, menus, change of dressings, physical therapy, and related matters. It is seldom necessary to be loud or obnoxious. It is necessary to maintain a gentle pressure.

VI. Thou Shalt Not Raise the Issue of Death

If at all possible, thou shalt not raise the issue of death or dying. But if the afflicted one wants to discuss the topic, thou shalt address it with the person and obtain all the information possible to carry out the instructions and wishes of the afflicted one. For example, since the information is needed for the death certificate, do you know the names of the parents of the afflicted one?

VII. Thou Shalt Obtain the Living Will

Thou shalt obtain or find the advance medical directive (also known as the living will) and carry out the intent as attested in that document. You must resist the family member who comes in from out of town with all the answers; you must resist the doctor who says we have another procedure to "try." Carry out the intentions of the afflicted one or turn your duties over to someone who can

do so. Terribly hard and fateful decisions may have to be made. You know what has to be done-do it.

VIII. Thou Shalt Take Care of Yourself

Thou shalt be sure to take care of the care giver. If the care giver goes down (and yes it happens all too frequently), this event does nothing to help the afflicted one. In fact, the afflicted one is harmed, for the burden of your predicament is added to the weight of the ills/problems of the afflicted one. Continue to workout if you have previously been so engaged, find time to eat and do not scrimp on food, and keep up with your friends and at least some of your meetings. Your life should continue, or you may pay a high price for your dedication to the afflicted one.

IX. Thou Shalt Communicate

Communicate with the children and family on the condition of the afflicted one. Depending on the maturity and interest of the person involved, you may elect to do some censoring of the information available. Many of the family will want to gather with the afflicted one as end of life approaches. It will be necessary to balance this desire to be present with episodes that are traumatic yet not the final act. The point of which is to say that you cannot cry wolf too frequently, or all will be worn out in trips that may or may not have been necessary.

X. Thou Shalt Give Thanks

At the end of the ordeal of the afflicted one, give thanks for the good times spent together, give thanks to the support of family and friends, give thanks for the life of the afflicted one, and pray that you may never again be so engaged.