

Small Prices to Pay

Putting a loved one in a nursing center is often a painful decision for family members. We must be sensitive to those emotions. Recently, I read a story by Marcia Schwartz, written for *Guideposts* magazine, which can be instructive to us, and to those we serve. It was about Ms. Schwartz's visit to her grandmother in a nursing home:

"Nice you've come," my grandmother whispered weakly from the bed. Just the night before, we had brought her to the nursing home because it now took several people to move her large-boned, crippled body. Her complexion looked pasty in the morning light and her colorless hair was wispy against her pillow.

Grandma was always so active, always doing for others. Now her hands lay limp on the sheets – hands that once served heaps of potatoes and fried chicken on blue willow plates, kneaded bread, patched overalls, gathered eggs and churned butter.

I shoved my hands into the pockets of my coat. I felt helpless and awkward, not knowing what to do or say.

Several days later, I went to a doctor for routine treatment. My three-year-old son stood wide-mouthed with fear and concern as we waited.

"Don't worry," I reassured him, "I'm all right."

Then he took my hand and held it quietly in his two small ones. My heart flooded with warmth and thankfulness. And suddenly, with my little boy holding my hand, I knew what I would do the very next time I visited my grandmother.

The story is an important reminder that the little things we do – the touch of a hand, a smile, a hug, a pat on the back – offer comfort and encouragement.

And those small prices buy a lot of relationship.

--Beecher Hunter