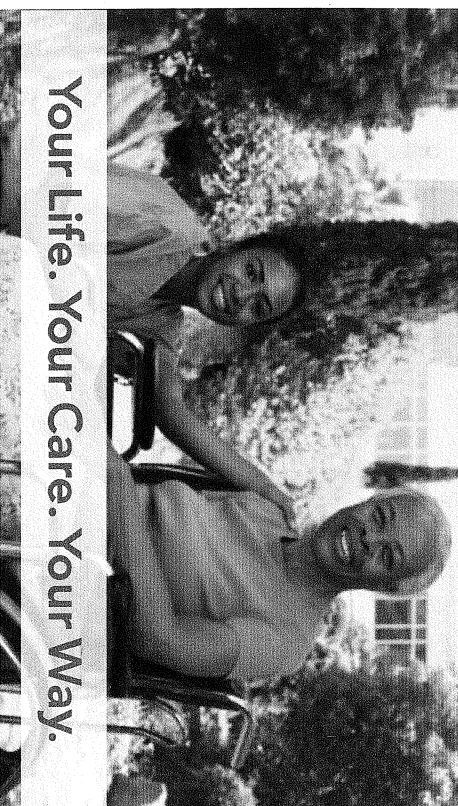


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elderly parents

Redefining Normal

By **Rai Glover**

As the youngest of six children to parents who were married 60 years, I asked my parents why they had me so late in their lives. I was born 18 years after my eldest sister and eight years after my brother. They simply said to me, "you were planned." I later learned that when my mother returned from her studies at La Sorbonne in Paris, France, and my father returned from finishing up course work in architectural engineering in Detroit, Michigan, I was conceived. Clearly, they had a "plan" and I was the result.

Fast forwarding through my life, I completed my education, built a career, got married, built a home, started a family, visited parents on weekends, attended family gatherings, and more. This was my normal. Then one day, I received a call. Dad had missed a step, fallen and fractured his hip. After a great recovery from rehabilitation, I thought it was back to normal, business as usual.

I didn't know at the time that my normal was about to be redefined because my father didn't say what

health-related changes he had experienced. After recovery, I noticed that dad's meticulous nature began to change more and more. Before I knew it, daddy's little girl had to rise to the occasion and oversee his care.

Each stage of dad's care brought nuances for which I had to adapt. Days, weeks, months and years went by of redefining and readjusting to my new normal. Redefining my normal meant that I would now manage the needs of two households.

This included staffing people to provide proper care for my father, while making certain that my mother would adapt to seeing her strong husband being cared for by someone. It also meant coordinating schedules, making weekly grocery shopping trips, paying household bills and taking family trips that now included my parents. I became part of the sandwich generation because I was now caring for the needs of my family and the needs of my parents.

My husband and children played a critical part in the care of my parents. They also had to redefine their normal. Our family vacations now included strolls on the beach with my



father in his wheelchair as onlookers observed.

Having lived 10 years in the space of caring for my parents, it became clearer to me that God must have placed me here to be a blessing — as they aged. Taking excellent care of my parents was always my goal.

The years of caring for my parents brought on many new responsibilities and emotions. I have found that even after it is all said and done, normal is redefined for life.

Redefining normal is one of the many tips that I give to individuals caring for aging parents. ■

Rai Glover is owner of Vigilant Healthcare Staffing, LLC, a licensed, insured and bonded home care agency accredited by the Better Business Bureau. She was previously employed for 23 years with Bank of America.

Rai has first-hand experience in caring for aging parents as she oversaw her parents' care for 10 years. Her father passed in 2007 at the age of 86. Her mother passed nine months ago at the age of 97.

Rai says that her faith in God and her positive outlook on life helped her through the years of managing her parents' care. She feels that her knowledge and experience can benefit others who are facing a similar situation and need guidance. Rai can be reached at 980-819-5003 or at RaiGlover@vigilantstaffing.com