



Armchair Quarterbacks

Get Them in the Game and Everyone Wins

What is an Armchair Quarterback?

An Armchair Quarterback is a family member or friend uninvolved in the day-to-day realities of caregiving who breezes in on occasion, full of advice and criticism:

- "What are you talking about? Mom is just fine. You're exaggerating. This kind of forgetfulness is normal at her age. You need to relax."
- "Mom should change her doctor."
- "How could you move Dad to an elder care facility? I would never do that to him."

Actually, armchair quarterbacks present an opportunity in disguise. Understand the basis of the behavior, learn a few communication tricks, and you can use their energy to meet your caregiving goals. Here are tips to turn an annoyance into an asset:

- Take a deep breath. You are under a great deal of stress. It affects your thinking and your interaction with others. Stop, count to 10 or go for a walk. Do whatever you need to do to **regain control of the situation with your intellect rather than feelings**. When you blow your top, you blow the opportunity.
- **Don't take the quarterback's criticism as a personal attack even when it feels like one.** This is not about you. It's not even about the senior in question. This is about the armchair quarterback.
- **See the situation from their point of view.** They most likely are feeling powerful emotions - guilt and helplessness - that fuel their behavior.
- **Remember they want to help.** They care, which is why they are there at the moment annoying you to no end. Now the goal is to get them to turn their care into something productive for all of you.
- **Find them a job.** No matter how small, if you can get them involved in a productive task, everyone will benefit. You need to be able to delegate jobs like mail pick-up, groceries or similar.
- **Communicate in a way that expresses your empathy** – your understanding of the quarterback's position: "It must be difficult to be so far away and concerned about Mom". But don't make these statements if you don't mean them. They can come out as sarcasm.