

The gift you give when you get vaccinated

I write this message not as a leader or as a member of the HR team, but rather as a daughter whose best friend, my 90-year-old mother, is a resident in a nursing home in Lancaster close to where I live. Like many of you, I have endured the loneliness this pandemic has brought. Before COVID, I spent time almost every day with my mom, not because I was being the dutiful daughter, but because I wanted to spend time with her.

I remember the last time I saw her before all the restrictions went into effect. It was March of last year. I remember telling her, "I am going to hug you every time I leave because I know that soon, I will be told I can't come to see you." Sure enough, the next day I got the call from the director of nursing explaining the "shutdown." It was a sad day, but had I known that it would be more than a year until I could hug her again, it would have been worse.

December and January brought the COVID-19 vaccine to both of us. I cried the day I got my first dose and again when she got her first dose because I knew that meant we were on the path to seeing each other again. FaceTime calls are great and virtual hugs suffice, but I needed a real hug from my mom – even at 60 years old.

Fast forward to March of 2021, when the director of nursing called and told me I could visit my mom whenever I wanted as long as they stayed "green." During that first visit, I hugged her so tight and never wanted to let her go. I love that I can go visit her, sit on her bed and talk about our days. We talk about our "Phillies" – how they did the day before and if Bryce hit a home run yet. My excitement tempers every time my phone rings and the number from her community lights up the screen. I worry they are going to tell me they need to close again because a team member has tested positive.

I know you all have caring hearts and truly appreciate those who provide your care and services. Thank you immensely for all you have done to support our team members and each other over the course of the past year. It is a blessing to serve you.

Thank you also to all our residents and team members who received the COVID-19 vaccine, thus far. For those of you who cannot receive the vaccine for health reasons, I pray for your healing so you are able. For those of you who have declined the vaccine, I beg you to reconsider and get yourself vaccinated.

All of our residents need to see their loved ones just as I need to see my mom. Please help us keep our communities open to families and friends by reconsidering your decision to get the vaccine. Thank you.

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