

one source Empowering Caregivers

NEWSLETTER SUMMER 2022



MESSAGE FROM

Carolyn Seyler

Executive Director



Now that the summer is in full swing, it is time to consider how to give a break to a very important person in our community... The In-Home Caregiver. Since March 2021 we have had such limited in-person assistance to help in-home caregivers. What we are talking about is learning to factor volunteer respite time back into your life, in any way possible as you return to a full volunteer respite status or begin anew.

The goal of The Summer of Respite 2022 is to achieve one four hour visit of COVID safe respite per week for the rest of the summer. Can you help us with this challenge? Our caregivers are many and are waiting for our help.

Filling the void post-caregiving

by Carole Carson

Reprinted with permission of *The Union*

Those of us who've been caregivers know how completely the role takes over our lives. The unrelenting demands of caregiving take a tremendous emotional and physical toll. And if that weren't enough, carrying the load can often exacerbate our own medical problems.

The upside, however, is the deeply satisfying experience of ministering to the needs of someone we love until the end of their days. The daily demands, while challenging to meet, give purpose and meaning to our lives. We are enriched by the experience far beyond what we give to our loved one.

But the day finally arrives when our caregiving duties end. What then?

JOURNEY FROM LOSS TO ADVENTURE

In and of itself, the loss of a loved one is hard. But if we were a caregiver, added to the pain is our loss of purpose — even our sense of identity.

Judy Tatelbaum, writing in the Hospice Foundation of America newsletter, explains: "The aftermath can be a very difficult time that leaves us feeling lost, lonely, and useless. We may not feel grounded without that important function of taking care of another in our lives. ... The future may look bleak or even empty."

...continued

ONE SOURCE
Empowering Caregivers

Volunteer Training

**Saturday
September 24, 2022**

10 am - 4:30 pm

Location TBA

EmpoweringCaregivers.org

10 Reasons to Volunteer

- #10: It's good for you
- #9: It saves resources
- #8: Volunteers gain professional experience
- #7: It brings people together
- #6: It promotes personal growth and self-esteem
- #5: Volunteering strengthens your community
- #4: You learn a lot
- #3: You get a chance to give back
- #2: Volunteering encourages civic responsibility
- #1: **YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE**



empoweringcaregivers.org

How to Survive as a Caregiver: Six Essential Tips

by Dorothy Kelley

Reprinted from *Today's Caregiver*

Have you ever found yourself thrust into a job that you would never have applied for, and for which you didn't have the background or training? For which you felt you were unsuited in so many ways? And for which you are not allowed to quit or retire? That scenario might be the stuff of most people's nightmares, but for millions of Americans, it is the reality of life as a caregiver.

The role of caregiver crept up on me very gradually. My fit and healthy husband, Mike, sixty-two years old, was exhausted and short of breath on returning home from a trip to Maui in 2012. He was still working at the time, and I was a happy retiree, active as a volunteer in my community, free to travel to see my children and grandchildren whenever I wanted.

As his symptoms worsened, I took Mike to several local specialists, and finally to the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, confident that a diagnosis and eventual cure were in our future. As the months wore on, he began to lose his eyesight to Retinal Vasculitis, then his bowel and bladder control. After a year-and-a-half of traveling back and forth to the Mayo Clinic, during which he was subjected to every kind of test, from PET scans to lung biopsies to spinal taps, we were told that he had a progressive, degenerative autoimmune disease that had no name. He was put on a high dose of steroids in an attempt to arrest his vision loss, and he was released.

That cold day in February 2014, as I drove the four hours home from the Mayo Clinic through the snow, was the beginning of my career as a full-time caregiver. It was the most difficult thing I've ever done, but as the months turned into years, I found some basic strategies that allowed me to keep going from day to day.

Learn how to redirect your thoughts. A caregiver's biggest enemy lurks inside her own head. Negative thoughts and overwhelming emotions can flare up many times a day, undermining your heartfelt intentions to be your best self for your loved one. Anxiety, sadness, doubt, anger, exhaustion and feelings of hopelessness can spiral out of control if

you are not vigilant. The poet Gerard Manley Hopkins said it best: "Oh the mind, mind has mountains. Cliffs of fall, frightful, sheer, no-man-fathomed."

I lost almost twenty pounds and woke up every morning feeling nauseous until I decided I had to try whatever it took to keep myself on an even keel. I started meditating every morning, just for a few minutes. I took comfort in reading a selection every night from John O'Donohue's book, *To Bless the Space Between Us: a Book of Blessings*, that helped me to focus on what was good in my life. Whenever negative thoughts intruded, I thought about my grand-daughters,

my happy summers at the lake in Minnesota when I was growing up. It is essential for your mental health that you find whatever positive antidotes work for you, and that you employ them as often as it takes for you to feel some measure of calm as you go about the challenges of each day.

Rely on friends and family. They can carry you through the worst of times on your caregiving journey. During a loved one's long illness, it can be embarrassing to feel as if you are always on the receiving end, unable to repay others for their many kindnesses.

But you need them, most importantly to give you the sense that you are not entirely alone in dealing with your situation. Friends who are not involved with your daily struggle can come up with wonderful insights, siblings can listen to you cry and make you laugh, neighbors can bring food or come to sit with your patient when you most need the relief.

Practice saying "yes," whenever someone offers to help, and just be grateful without feeling guilty. With your hard-earned compassion for others in your situation, you will reciprocate when you can.

Do your homework. Fear and uncertainty are the caregiver's constant companions. The feeling that you have no control over your situation, that you don't know what is going to happen next, can fan the embers of your anxiety into an out-of-control wildfire. Many of us have dealt with the fear of not being able to continue to care for a loved one in the home or



with worry about finances.

Having a plan for the future, even if it has to be scrapped or revised at a later date, can do wonders to calm your anxiety. Tour local skilled care facilities and bring along a friend to take notes, so that you know which one you want when the time comes, and what it will cost. Research condos and apartments to see what is available in your area in case you need to move to a more accessible living arrangement. Contact a realtor and ask how much your home might sell for. Delve into your finances and learn exactly what your assets are and how to access them. Find out how Medicaid works and what the financial implications are for both the patient and the spouse.

Force yourself to take time off. It is well-known that many caregivers die before their loved ones. The relentless, all-consuming nature of the work takes its toll both physically and mentally. Many long-term care policies will allow you

to hire a home-healthcare agency to give you some relief for a few hours a week. If you can't find someone to come into your home while you leave town, look into skilled care facilities that offer respite care. If you can't get away for more than a day, settle for several hours. If you feel you can only spare a few minutes, lose yourself in a book for an hour. Take a long walk. Sit at a window and watch the birds on your feeders. The goal is to stop thinking about yourself, your loved one, and your unique situation long enough to recharge your energy.

Forgive yourself. The work of a caregiver is exhausting, often it can feel thankless and lonely. It is not possible to be at the top of your game at all times. Don't allow yourself to wallow in regret. Remind yourself of the good work you are doing to ease the suffering of your loved one. What you are doing is honorable, and you are doing your best. You deserve to feel good about yourself.

Filling the Void... continued from page 1 possibilities.

Making our way through this period of despair, however, ultimately leads to new possibilities. Slowly, we begin to realize that while a chapter of our life has ended, new chapters remain to be written. In time, if we're lucky, we find that mixed in with the feelings of loss are the stirrings of prospects for new adventures.

I'm convinced, though, that it isn't possible to go directly from the sorrow of loss to the joyfulness of new possibilities. The road after the loss of a loved one is bumpy and filled with potholes as far as the eye can see. Barely navigable at the beginning, the road seems to get smoother and easier to travel over time.

However difficult, creating a new life for ourselves can't be avoided. Change is required, even demanded of us. But the task of making so many changes — if tackled in its entirety — can be overwhelming. Taking small steps, rather than giant leaps, is the best solution for many of us.

But clearly, I don't follow my own advice. I took a giant step. As some readers know, following my husband's death a year ago, I sold my house, rid myself of possessions and moved to France. In the space of a 14-hour flight, the wonderful friends, familiar scenes, favorite restaurants and frequent walks on the canal near my rural home disappeared.

In their place came the inescapable demands of learning to function in an urban environment where I did not speak the language. By moving halfway around the world, I forced myself to forge a new life, a new identity.

But as I've discovered, a change in geography doesn't mean I could escape the emotional work required to make the transition from caregiver to adventurer. On the contrary, on any given day, I alternate between despair and delight, from a sense of frustration to a sense of accomplishment, or from a fear of the future to an eager anticipation of what's next.



Like others before me and those who will follow, I am learning by living. I take comfort in the words of Eleanor Roosevelt, who said, "You gain strength, courage and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You are able to say to yourself . . . 'I can take the next thing that comes along.'"

We can be sure that as long as we are alive, "the next thing" will come along. And the stronger we get, the more confident we can be in our ability to face whatever the future holds.

Carole Carson, is an author, former AARP website contributor, and leader of the 1994 Nevada County Meltdown.

Caregiver Support TRAINING for VOLUNTEERS

Saturday, September 24, 2022 10 am - 4:30 pm

Are you a new volunteer who wants to learn how to help caregivers in the home understand their options for respite support, or a current volunteer who would like to refresh their knowledge? Then you're invited to our Volunteer Training. Let's help each other redefine the caregiver needs and opportunities for support. This is an opportunity for everyone, so please join our One Source-Empowering Caregivers Volunteer Training

Registration is required

Call (530) 205-9514 (leave message). Email us at ED@EmpoweringCaregivers.org

Mail this form to One Source-Empowering Caregivers
524 Brunswick Road, Grass Valley, CA 95945

NAME: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Nevada City Film Festival presents
award winning documentary
JACK HAS A PLAN
Saturday, August 27th
3:30 pm
Nevada City Theater
After the film there will be
an interactive conversation
about the film making
and the film content.



Cedar Ridge, CA 95924

P.O. Box 311

one source
empowering caregivers™

