

On the Path of the Perfecting Caregiver

Truths Along the Way

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What I am

Learning

About

Supporting

With

Compassion

- 1. Living in the moment.**
- 2. Tender moments to be cherished.**
- 3. There is no “later” in your partner’s time!**
- 4. Routines increase contented involvement.**
- 5. Truth and perception collide in the communication among family members**
- 6. Often, mood changes are unpredictable and unexpected.**
- 7. Take time to focus on my breathing.**
- 8. The unexpected can bring out competencies in a partner that otherwise would not have surfaced.**
- 9. Avoid using the word “no” in conversations with your partner.**
- 10. All things are possible
Many things are probable
Some things are bound to happen
Nothing will change until I do!**
- 11. Be prepared to be interrupted. Put things down and go with the flow. Items on my to-do list can wait.**
- 12. There is no right versus wrong in our memories.
Past events are only perceptions of what we believe to be true that are not worth arguing about.**
- 13. Take the responsibility to be wrong and mistaken following your partner’s comments about what has occurred in the past.**
- 14. When your loved one misplaces something of value, calmly react that something is missing and wonder where it may be. Place no blame.**

- 15. Every day is a new experiment.**
- 16. A mystery unfolds each day if I stop, look and listen for its arrival.**
- 17. React to stories from the past, even though you have heard them many times, as if this is the first time.**
- 18. Setting the tone for the next positive interaction takes planning and insight.**
- 19. We are more alike than different.**
- 20. Sometimes, it is better not to respond and listen.**
- 21. Every morning starts with a clean slate. What happened yesterday is in the past and what will happen tomorrow is anyone's guess. Focus on the now.**
- 22. Delusions by a loved one can hurt – don't take any words personally. Your partner is hurting when they use their words. Hurting can be an adjective and a verb.**
- 23. The currently volatile situation will soon pass. Look beyond the words to the person you love.**
- 24. Outside support should be perceived as what helps you even if your partner does not agree with those supports.**
- 25. Even though it is easier to do things for your loved one, let them do as much of an activity as they are comfortable.**
- 26. Next Thursday, Friday or Saturday may all mean the same. The only reality is right now!**

27. ***“I’m sorry.”*** is often the best response when being accused of an action from the past that you’re quite sure was not your doing. ***“I’ll remember not to do that in the future.”*** is also not a bad response.
28. When evaluating what course of action to take on any given day, think to yourself, ***“What would I say about this activity 10 years from now?”***
29. Plan the day so that there are at least seven activities that involve both of you in its completion.
30. Emergences are an unfolding of events to be expected. Even though there is only one letter added, plan for emergencies to avoid emergencies.
31. Sometimes outside supports cause greater stress than benefits. Your partner may not not be ready for such supports . . . yet.
32. Be persistent in your love and caring. There will be a time when your partner will accept supports that previously led to emotional outbursts . . . especially in the area of personal hygiene.
33. There will always be something missing. Don’t panic. Just realize that you will find each item at unexpected times in the future.
34. Celebrate the small victories each day!
35. The practice of mindfulness may be enhanced by reading from the writings of Thich Nhat Hanh.
36. If I only followed my own advice, things would run more smoothly throughout each day!
37. Timing may not be everything, but it is something that must be fine tuned each day.

- 38. Our story/journey is our story/journey. It is worth remembering but it is not the story/journey of anyone else.**
- 39. There is an expression, “Expected the unexpected!” Just as important is an equally true expression, “Expect the expected!”**
- 40. It’s a new day – enough said!**
- 41. Say “Thank you” several times a day so that your partner knows how much they are appreciated.**
- 42. You cannot “fix” your partner. However, you can fix/change the environment to meet your partner’s needs.**
- 43. Sometimes, a small, momentary incident can trigger a whole lot of unpleasant memories in your loved one.**
- 44. Maintaining a sense of humor helps to view a daily idiosyncrasy in a new light.**
- 45. An outing can be important in and of itself; the destination often doesn’t matter.**
- 46. A statement like, “It’s time for _____.” is preferred to a question, “Do you want to _____?”**
- 47. Our tone of voice and body language often convey a far different message to our loved ones than do just our words.**
- 48. When reacting to a stressful situation think (Is what I’m about to say going to escalate this tension further?) before responding. Sometimes, doing nothing is more important than reacting in an emotionally driven manner.**

49. **There are treasures buried within the many piles of stuff. Take time to uncover each one.**
50. *Slow down, you're moving too fast,
You got to make these moments last.
No need to hurry, no need to run.
The important things will still get done.*
51. **When I hear your words of anger, I realize you are experiencing anguish!**
52. **It is better to wait outside a store 15 minutes before it opens than to spend that same 15 minutes at home amid anxiety and tension about making it to that store before it opens!**
53. **It is far more productive to request my spouse to do something new if I am in the process of helping her with a current activity.**
54. **The emotional highs and lows of a relationship will occur at unexpected times; however, the lows will be brief and will run their course.**
55. **Reflect and study what happens on days filled with positive feelings and outcomes in order to better plan the sequence of events on future days.**
56. **Be careful not to punish a loved one for not complying with a directive but find a more creative way to achieve the same outcome.**
57. **When your spouse approaches you with a need or request for help, there is a better outcome than if you initiate that same need/request.**
58. **Find meaning and connections in objects/items identified by your loved one, when that connection may not have been uncovered.**

59. **Your spouse may be more comfortable with a small plate/bowl with food than a large plate/bowl with a great deal of food.**
60. **The destination may not be the real goal; spending quality time with a loved one takes precedence.**
61. **Recharge your batteries. Sit on the couch, hold hands and listen to some soothing music with your loved one.**
62. **When all is said and done, there is always more to say and do!**
63. **Home is a Judgement Free Zone!**
64. **There's no limit to the number of hugs you can offer your loved one.**
65. **When a loved one is continually confused about their relationship with a family member, let it be.**
66. **When a significant memory is forgotten it doesn't mean it didn't happen. Don't argue about it.**
67. **The more household chores we do together, the more I also complete on my own, as well.**
68. **The names of stores/places don't register as much as what may have happened in those stores/places.**
69. ***Sometimes you go looking for connections; while at other times, connections come looking for you.***
70. **A gentle approach to a perceived action is preferred over a verbal reprimand.**
71. ***"You are never strong enough that you don't need help."* Cesar Chavez**

- 72. *We both have different memories of our past and we are both right to respect each other's memories.* ELP**
- 73. When you announce what you are going to do next, it extends an invitation for your loved one to join you.**
- 74. Don't argue facts.
Look beyond the facts.**
- 75. Moving from one activity to another is easier than initiating a new activity after a period of inactivity.**
- 76. Mistakes are going to happen. How will you change your approach the next time similar circumstances occur?**
- 77. Recasting can be a beneficial response; i.e., when a loved one refers to a member of the family and mentions a relationship that isn't true, recast that relationship in its true form, without sounding like one is correcting that perception.**
- 78. Perspective: When a loved one engages in arranging more clutter, look at it as an opportunity for more exercise in putting items back in their respective places.**
- 79. When a loved one asks who you are and what are you doing here – refocus your answer on being a friend who wants to be with them.**
- 80. Keep a journal of perceptions, reactions, thoughts, opinions etc. of your interactions and reflect back on those journal entries on a regular basis.**
- 81. Negative sounding feedback can be restated in more positive terms; i.e., instead of "Your shoes are on the wrong feet." say, "This shoe would feel more comfortable on the other foot." and instead of "You spilled some food on your gown." say "Some food fell off your spoon."**

- 82. Working along side your spouse is a better strategy than giving confusing directions about what to do; i.e., vacuuming (get a second vacuum), cleaning the kitchen sink (each one have some paper towels), making the bed (each person on each side), etc.**
- 83. When making a transition to a new activity, give your loved one an item that will be needed in that new activity; i.e., a nightgown when it is time to get ready for bed.**
- 84. Avoid using phrases like “Try to remember.” or “Don’t forget to _____.”**
- 85. Draw attention to an item(s) that may be currently not tended to such as a bowl of cereal placed nearby - - - many times, if necessary.**
- 86. Play light, classical music in the back-ground during times when “waiting” is difficult, like a repair person coming to the house.**
- 87. What I’m learning about myself is as equally important as what I am doing for you.**
- 88. There is always a significant challenge looming throughout each day; the name just keeps changing.**
- 89. The opposite of a fact is a falsehood, but the opposite of one profound truth may very well be another profound truth. (Niels Bohr)**
- 90. Learning to live with imaginary people may be better than trying to explain away their existence.**
- 91. The art of caregiving is in a constant cycle of revision and reassessment.**

92. The following two requests should always receive an immediate “yes.” *Will you help me with something? Will you sit down beside me?*
93. With apologies to Kenny Rogers:
Know when to hold back.
Know when not to talk again.
Know when to walk away.
Know when to count to ten.
94. It is often more effective when asking your partner to complete a reluctant activity to precede it with a request that is likely to be responded to a favorable manner. For example, at times your partner may not take medication from hand to mouth. They are more likely to respond positively to this request if first they sample some of the fruit drink or beverage that goes along with the medicine.
95. There’s always something that needs to be completed in each room. Follow your loved one to the room of their choice and I predict there is something that also needs your attention in that room.
96. The gentleness approach is not always the easiest approach, but in the long run, is the right choice.
97. Your loved one is not a child in an adult body but an “adult” with a steadily changing brain and should experience interactions in an adult-to-adult manner.
- 98.6 Normal – I think not! Then perhaps normal was just a myth to begin with!
99. Try something again even if it didn’t work the first time. Timing is everything.

- 100. Truths are reminders of the relationship we have with a loved one. Non one has THE TRUTH but, together, we share our “truths” and**
- My truths are my truths
Your truths are your truths.
My truths may not be your truths.
Your truths may not be my truths.**
- 101. Forgive yourself for allowing fatigue and frustration to permit feeling sorry for your SELF. Contributed by G.S.**
- 102. Living in the present moment: if a relative is visiting tomorrow, wait until tomorrow to tell you loved one.**
- 103. Realizing what to do next is often determined by a set of values and truths rather than what is right or wrong to do.**
- 104. ... *the more distressed you are, the more distressed and behaviorally unpredictable the person with dementia will be.* (Pauline Boss, *Loving Someone with Dementia: How to Find Hope While Coping with Stress and Grief*)**
- 105. There is an impermanence to success. What worked well one day may never work again and what did not work today may, in fact, be just the right strategy tomorrow.**
- 106. Your loved one has gifts to share if we are gift finders.**
- 107. When giving a loved a specific request, the network of connections in the brain for receiving, interpreting and responding to that request may be interrupted. That doesn't mean the person cannot physically complete the request.**

- 108. When someone has a challenge that you have also faced, don't offer advice on what they should do. Instead, offer a strategy you tried that appeared to be successful.**
- 109. During times of peaceful contentment, think back on the rocky road to get there and give yourself a pat on the back for staying true to your values when interacting with a loved one.**
- 110. You can never say, "I love you." too often in both words and gestures.**
- 111. When providing feedback use statements like –**
In my experiences, I tried . . .
A great resource I have discovered is . . .
A strategy that seemed to work for me was
... Instead of ...
You must review the following resource: . . .
Go to this website: . . .
That's not right. Do . . .
- 112. Rather than, "I don't have time for _____," a more accurate statement is "I don't take the time for _____."**
- 113. It seems to be better to have Marsha sleep in the living room in her hospital bed, and in the middle of activities/movement by others, than to be in a different room removed from the normal pattern of daily activities.**
- 114. Sometimes doing nothing is an apt response as in the expression attributed to Martin Gabel: *Don't just do something, stand there!***