

On the Path of the Perfecting Caregiver

**Reflections Using the Visual Organizers
of an Acrostic Poem and
Other Graphic Displays**

Current Update: 03/15/26

Ernest L. Pancsofar

I have been an adherent to the graphic organizer called an acrostic poem. I have also included other graphic organizers that provided clarity to my thoughts and feelings. The content of this document contains reflections over the past five years in my role as caregiver for my wife who lived her final years with dementia.

3/19/23



One of the creative connections I have used in the past is to associate a playing card with what is happening in my life at the moment. The 9 of diamonds surfaced yesterday and I decided to identify 9 “gems” of advice I would give myself for the upcoming few months to foster contented involvement for both Marsha and me.

4/12/23

Setting up Routines
Using Time Wisely
Contented Involvement
Celebrating Small Victories
Enjoying the Moment
Simplifying Daily Demands
Seeing Meaningful Connections

I have used this acronym over the years to define what success means to me at various points of time in my life. Here is my current version.

6/11/23

*We make gre **A**t company!*
*We are here **F**or each other.*
*Being mind **F**ul is necessary.*
*It's a good **I**ife, my dear.*
*Follow **R**outines daily.*
*We are cal **M** and peaceful.*
*We hold h **A**nds together.*
*Quality **T**imes matter!*
*I like grow **I**ng older with you.*
*Let's do n **O**thing together!*
*Nadya and **N**atyra are special daughters!*
***S**low down!*

6/20/23

Cre **A** tive Outlets
 Refle **C** tion
 Re **C** eptivity
 Harm **O** ny
 Fa **M** ily
 P **e** ace of Mind
 L **e** gacy
 Marr **I** age
 Humblene **S** s
 P **H**. D
 Me **M** ories
 D **E** bt Free
 Frie **N** dships
 Comfor **T** ability
 Journal **S**

While sitting out on the deck, Ernie wrote down what he considered accomplishments in his life that currently resonate with him.



From Ernie's perspective, here are some accomplishments that resonate with him for Marsha.



Nadya - J **A** y - Natyra
 SIU - **C** Master's Program
 Nu **C** lear Freeze Movement
 W **O** men Church
 League of Wo **M** en Voters
 P **o** litically Savvy
 Genea **L** ogy Interest
 Open **M** I nded
S aves EVERYTHING!
 Birt **H** Parent Support Group
 Long Ti **M** e Friend - Alria
 Respit **E** Care
 Family **N** urturer
 Volun **T** eer in Schools
S oul Mate - Ernie

6/25/23

A WELCOME VISIT LAST WEEK
 FROM NATYRA
 Home Depot - flowers
 F **I** rst Alaskans Docu-Series
 Dr. Ber **G** Tele-Video Appt.
 New Was **H** er & Dryer
 Scal **L** ops & Cod Dinner
 Conversat **I** ons on the Deck
 Gardening
 S **H** aring Time & Space
 Mot **T** a's Pizza
 Natyra' **S** Presence

12/01/23

G enuine
R eflexive
A ctive
T hankful
I deal
T ruthful
U nconditional
D elicate
E arnest

7/09/23

Rest **I**ng
Bewilderme**N**t
Confusio**N**
W **O**nder
Pea**C**e
Tendern**E**ss
Unspoke**N**
Existen**C**e
Awar**E**ness

*I see you **resting** across the way;
Eyes are closed this time of day.*

***Bewilderment** occupies a space in your mind.
I wonder what else there we could find.*

***Confusion** certainly has a place
Of prominence in that hidden space.*

*I **wonder** what my role can be
To help you and me become a we.*

***Peace** is a welcome state
To put on our daily plate.*

***Tenderness** should be our plan.
With practice, I think we can*

*Interact in **unspoken** affections
In our daily interactions.*

*Our current **existence**
Requires much patience*

*And **awareness** of our values and truths
We formed long ago in our youths.*

8/09/23

Write reflections

Involve loved one in choices

Share experiences with family members

Discover creative approaches

Observe contented involvement

Make mistakes - to learn from

8/31/23

Each of us can take time to **J**oin in
Reflection to pause & disc**O**ver the
Lear**N**ing that daily occurs in o**U**r
Lives when we search inwa**R**dly. This
Requires a strong commitme**N**t to use
One 's energy to live each and **E**very day
Wi**S**ely - throughout all of our **Y**ears.

11/17/23

I developed the following acrostic and poem to summarize my approach to teaching. I see many parallels to my current care giving role.

C onnections	
F ree R edom	
E xcitement	
P l A y	Making connections from a variety of resources
T ime	Means freedom to choose how to approach my courses.
I nitiative	Excitement should be felt by one and all.
G iv V ing	Play and work answer to the same call
Reflect I on	When I use my time in chosen ways
Grow T h	And take initiative in all my days
M ystical	To be giving and caring with each one.

11/15/23



12/26/23

Love endures forever – so the saying goes.
What comes after forever? It seems nobody knows.

Joy exists in small events that take place throughout each day.
When taken all together – Joy happens just that way.

Peace comes in pieces in little moments of time.
Peace is an outcome – 10 pennies for a dime.

Patience holds a space of waiting
Not acting without first listening.

Kindness can be a part of everything we do.
It's an attitude and frame of mind with compassion mixed in too.

Goodness contains selfless acts of doing.
Perceived in abundance from a loved one's viewing.

Faithfulness is a vow to strengthen the ties
Between us as we advance in each of our lives.

Gentleness is a mood in
our actions with each one
With respect and dignity
in all that is done.

Self-Control evades me
in ways to be more fit.
So, I'll make a goal
of loving you and know
I'll accomplish it.



2/10/24

P resence
R outines
O bserve
C ontent
E qual
S low Down
S ilence

Your **presence** each day
Enlightens the way
We do our **routines**
together as a team
I **observe** movements
To create improvements
To be **content** & satisfied
With you at my side
Equal in our status in life
Living as husband & wife
Slow down our pace
Life is not a race
And in **silence** and peace
Our love will never cease.

2/20/24

S acred Space
U nique Journeys
P ersonal Stories
P ersonal Perspectives by Facilitator
C O nnectd
R espectful Listening
T ransitions

G ratitude
R outines Matter
N O njudgemental
U seful Information
P ersonal Growth

7/24/24

Notes from a support
group meeting

Refram **I** ng
Fra **N** kl Quote
It Goe **S** Around and Around
G I ve up the Need to be Right
Tou **G** hest Journey
H ang in There!
4 **S** **T** eps Forward
2 **S** eps Back

3/12/24

Always **A**im to **A**chieve **A**ccomplishments.

Take **T**ime To **T**each **T**olerance.

Teaching **T**akes **T**act and **T**echnique.

Initial **I**nsights **I**nvolve an **I**nvestment of your time.

Triumph **T**oward **T**ackling **T**ough challenges.

Understand **U**niqueness and **U**ncomfortable **U**ncertainties.

Demand **D**iligence **D**uring **D**eliberations

Encourage & **E**ngage **E**veryone **E**qually.

6/7/24



*I try to **remember** my current ways
to **balance** the activities throughout the days.
I need to **remember** where my **strength** originates
When I develop my **goals** and not eliminate
A place for **Hope** - - - but I digress
In my moment-to-moment view of **success**.*

6/26/24

I nner Voice
N etworking
T ender Moments
R eframing
O ngoing Experiences
S tress Reduction
P ositive Feedback
E xploration
C ommitments
T ension
I nspirations
O pportunities
N ever Say Never

While sitting on our deck yesterday, I pondered on the elements of INTROSPECTION.

My inner voice speaks – No one hears but me. Wisdom and guidance Are offered for free.

Networking on-line With caregiving friends Provides me resources Some odds and ends.

Tender moments occur at unexpected times Be on the lookout Compose some rhymes

Reframing can put Events in a new light Turning a wrong Into a right.

Our life consists of Ongoing Experiences Let's not get stuck Focusing on differences.

Stress reduction breaths Relax my mind Calm my spirit From the daily grind.

Give positive feedback And set the tone With affirming words In a negative-free zone.

This Alzheimer's condition Needs more exploration Just how do I fit in Amid this situation.

My commitments To you made long ago I am here by your side Forever - - - you know.

For no apparent reason Tension is in the air I go with the flow From here to there.

Inspiration's knocking At my kitchen door. I welcome its presence I could use some more.

There are opportunities To figure out what to do I'll slow down and listen To feedback from you.

Never Say Never! Be open to the call. There are no ANSWERS But options for us all!

8/27/24

Words found on different items in the living room

Nice
Thanks
Peaceful
Dream
Moment
Enjoy
Together
Kind
Hearted
Happiness

A Poem to Marsha on the Occasion of my 73rd Birthday

Thanks for being here with me
Moment-to-moment is the way to be.
There's peaceful music in the air
Knowing together – we make a good pair.
You are kind, caring and good besides,
I feel happiness with you by my side
As we enjoy how our lives do unfold
A warm-hearted love as our hands we hold.
It's nice to have you in my life
As we dream on today as husband and wife

10/10/24

P ursuing
A ctivities with the
S ense of
S acred
I nspiration and
O ngoing
I N trospection

3/12/24

10/28/24

G iving
 Volunte**E** ring
 Do **N** ating
 Attitud**E**
 Expe**R** tise
 Supp**O** rt
S pirit
T ime
 Commi**T** ment
Y es I Can!

E rnie's
 Ne**X** t
 Pers**P** ective
 On Lif**E**
 Evolves **F** **R** om
 Prev**I** ous
E ncounters
 Without **K** **N** owing
 Whi**C** h ones are the
 Most **M** **E** aningful

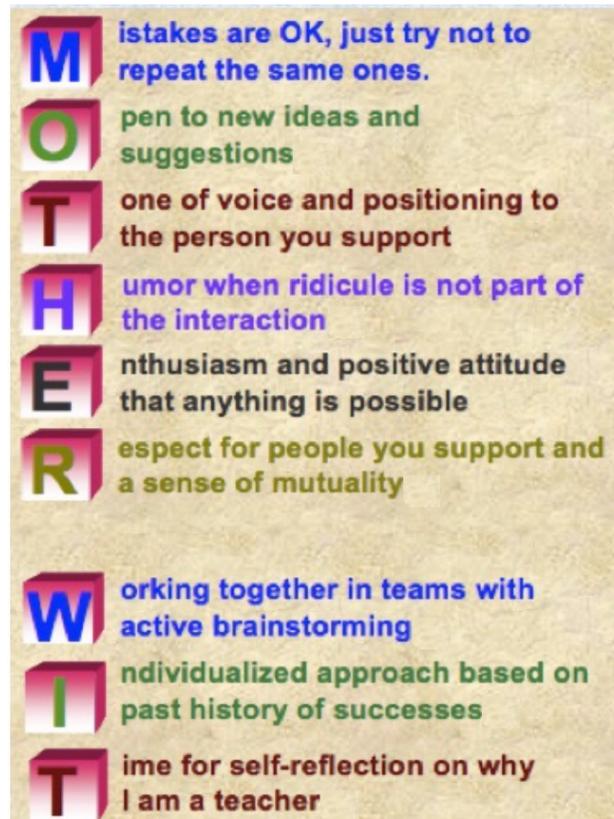
S **E** nse of
K **N** owing
A **O** ut
S **U** ccessful
Livin **G**
With Your **H** eart

11/6/24 Influenced by John McKnight's teachings:
What are Marsha's Gifts?

Inspirin **G** My Own Creativity
Lov **I** ng Nature
Re **F** lection of all
T hat is Good
Companion **S** hip

12/10/24

As I worked on my acrostic puzzle this week, one of the answers was mother wit. This reminded me of a graphic organizer I developed several years ago. Caregiver could replace “teacher” for the final element.



02/13/25

12 Cs of Being a Caregiver

Calm in Difficult Times
Companion and Friend
Capability to Continue to Grow
Capacity to Keep on Learning
Challenged to Do Better
Creative Decision Maker
Competent to the Task
Caring and **Concerned**
Committed to a **Cause**
Confident Based on Past Successes

08/01/25

Let Your  Shine!

Your spirit took flight  on March 22, 2025.

You were my heart .

Your presence enlightened me. 

Our lives had many high points. 

You didn't need the spotlight. 

I witnessed your perseverance  with a brain changing disease

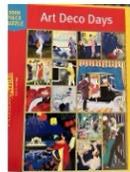
As we entered the twilight  of our lives.

You remain the dear friend  of my life.

3/15/25

Marsha's family gathered around her one week before she died. The images below and the poem on the following page help to commemorate this occasion.

Butterfl **I** es and Flowers



Art **D** eco Puzzle

Littl **E** Prince



S cratch Tickets

Robert **O** 's Log Cabin



F ocus on Marsha

(Mom/Nana)



M
N A
NATYRA
E D S
RANDY H
N A A
I
LEO

Fa **M** ily Gathering

Photo **A** lbum



Siste **R** s

Omni **C** hord



Claudia's **H** elp



2025

Saturday, March 15th

IDES OF MARCH

There was a Family Gathering on this momentous day
With a focus on Marsha (Mom/Nana) as a way
Of honoring this matriarch of our family.

Nadya assembled a Butterflies and Flowers display
While Randy & Leo Scratched their lottery Tickets in dismay;
Winning the big payoff will just have to wait another time.

The Photo Album presents a history of Marsha's life
Before and after becoming Ernie's wife
And it will be cherished forever.

Orders were taken for Roberto's Log Cabin
They have every kind of food that you could imagine
And it was just down the road in Lebanon.

The Little Prince made an unexpected presence
As Nadya & Leo prepared his appearance
Reading from the book, cover-to-cover.

Ernie has this important message to report
Sisters (Nadya and Natyra) provide enormous support
For him as the primary caregiver for Marsha.

A puzzle with a Art Deco theme
Was assembled by Natyra and others on her team,
One of many more over the weekend.

Leo strummed on the Omnichord and could be heard
As Ernie worked another answer to his crossword.
The atmosphere was upbeat and positive.

There's no need for anyone to get nervous
Claudia is here to offer her service
And is embraced as Marsha's valued companion and friend

08/03/25

Be mindful of
each m**O**ment
fo**R**one
neve**R**
kn**O**ws
When
d**E**ath
Decides

I composed this acrostic
poem after hearing
George Ducharme read the
poem *Borrowed Time* at
Marsha's Memorial
Tribute.

To
ins**I**st that
we co**M**e
hom**E**.

10/01/25

Marsha's School for Life

Movement
(dance, yoga, walking)

Adventure
(following my passion)

Renewal
(each moment is a new beginning)

Spiritual connection
(breathing, meditation, prayer, awareness of sacred)

Healthy eating
(flexible, moderation, personal, livable)

All together now
(synergy)

Although I placed this
acrostic on October 1st, it
was originally composed
by Marsha in 2001.

10/16/25

Written following a brief visit with my mom
and dad in Greensboro, North Carolina.

Extraord **I** ary Care

M ary and Gene

P rovide for Mom & Dad

Count **R** ry Park

E xercising Each Day

Mary Prepared **S** uperb Meals and

S eamstress Duties, As Well

Mom's Brief Hosp **I** tal Stay for Fracture in Hip

H **O** noring Mom & Dad's Presence

Co **N** versations With

S iblings & Relatives

T **I** me to Process

Mome **N** ts Without Marsha

Looki **N** g Forward to

Next Oc **C** asion to Visit

2025

03/11/26



**Images of Winter Provided by Members of
Caregiver Support Group**

03/15/26

I had developed an initial visual organizer on two opposing outlooks on dementia using light versus shadow. After reading Lynn Casteel Harper's treatment of how using light/dark comparison results in an either/or rather than a complementary view of light and darkness, I developed a revised graphic below.

Acrostic Visual Organizers

Shadow Side	In the Light
What Do You Need	D evelop Interdependence
A Lost Adventure	E nrichment of "What Is"
Doom & Gloom	M eaningful Times Together
Dreadful Fate	E nduring Love & Connection
Sadness & Depression	N ew Sense of "Normal"
Dwell on What is Lost	T hankful for What Still Is
A Lost You and	I welcome a "New " Us
Missing Parts of Marsha	A ccess to Marsha's "Essence"

Focus We Bring to the Caregiving Experience

Loss of Personhood
Dependency
Nothing to Offer

Promoting Personhood
Interdependency
Cocreate Healthy Relationships

Dependency Expecte **D** evelop Interdependence

A Lost Adventure **E** nrichment of What Is

Doom and Gloom **M** eaningful Times Together

Dreadful Fate **E** nduring Love and Connection

Sadness and Depressio **N** ew Sense of "Normal"

Dwell on What Was Los **T** hankful For What Still Is

A Lost You and **I** Welcome a New "US"

Missing Parts of Marsh **A** ccess to Marsha's Essence