

On the Path of a Perfecting Care Partner

Perceptions Along the Way

Version 3

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Considerate
P **A**uses
Inte **R**connected
Do What Mak **E**S You Better

Im **P**rovides
Advocate
Being P **R**esent
S **T**ory Teller
Ki **N**d
Lif **E**-long Learner
Humo **R**/Wisdom

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Introduction

Let's recall the premise behind the movie Groundhog Day. Do you remember it? Phil Connors, played by Bill Murray, experiences the same day over and over again. Each day contains the same events at predictable times.

This is the image I often recollect when providing supports for Marsha, my wife who lived her final five years at home with an advanced manifestation of Alzheimer's disease.

It was always TODAY!

Yesterday was a blur.

Tomorrow doesn't mean anything.

Every day is TODAY.

I remember hearing a story about a sign that was posted on the wall behind a bar. On the sign was written: FREE BEER TOMORROW!

Wow, that's great thought the customer. So the next day he approached the bartender and said, "I'm here for my free beer."

"What do you mean," responded the bartender.

"I was in here yesterday and saw the sign: Free Beer Tomorrow"

"Oh," said the bartender. "That's not for today, that's for tomorrow!"

Introduction (continued)

In essence, there is never “free” beer!

Let’s go back to the movie, Groundhog Day. What was the real message about what Phil Connors did each day in anticipation of the same events occurring? He did things that made him a better human being.

I am saying to you, we can be better human beings if we take the opportunities given to us to do what makes us better.

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Be Kind / Be Present

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It's not unusual for a loved one to ask the same question over and over again as if they had not heard your previous response. Here is what not to say:

I already answered you, did you forget! Or, I already answered you, weren't you listening?

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When I heard a question repeated again, I learned to change the focus from answering the question the same way to doing something different with my response.

This took some practice and I had to repress my initial reaction to tell Marsha I had already answered her question like "When will Nadya be here?"

Be Kind / Be Present (continued)

I also had to realize that telling her the exact date/day our daughter Nadya would be arriving did not provide her with information she could process. Remember: **Today is Today** – Tomorrow is a time that doesn't connect with her sense of time.

Instead I would respond in a more creative way:

- *Let's figure out what we will do when Nadya is here.*
- *Why don't we call Nadya and ask her?*
- *Let me check my messages to see if she left an update for when she will arrive.*
- *I miss not having her here more. Are you sad that she is not here right now?*
- *I need to go grocery shopping for food for when she is here. Do you want to go with me?*
- *Do you want to do something special when she gets here?*

Redirecting Marsha with a comment like *Let's go look at her bedroom to see if we can make it more comfortable for her visit* is a much more considerate response than bringing to her attention that she already asked the question and indicate with my tone of voice that it frustrated me.

Be Kind / Be Present

A Reflective Poem

*I often respond to the same questions
several times per day:*

*When's Natyra coming?
When is your birthday?
Where are we going?*

Marsha will say.

*I respond without any hesitation.
And try not to express any frustration,
Because it's a way of making a
connection*

*As I'm writing this reflection,
Our being present in each other's life
Is a husband's gift to his wife! ELP*

Marsha: *You must
not think highly of
me when I ask you
the same questions
over and over.*

Ernie: *You can ask
me any question
you want as many
times as you want.
. . and that's OK!*

**There are three
ways to ultimate
success: the first
way is to be kind.
The second way is
to be kind. The
third way is to be
kind. Fred Rogers**

**I just thought of a
fourth way to
ultimate success –
you guessed it – to
be kind. (ELP)**

Be Kind / Be Present



“What day is it?” asked Pooh.

“It’s today,” squeaked Piglet.

“My favorite day,” said Pooh.

A.A. Milne

Today: Take each 5 minutes and concentrate on the here and now!

Today: Spend time holding hands and listening to music together.

Today: Enjoy the little things in life.

Today: Be creative in responding to unexpected challenges.

Today: Slow down! Don’t rush. There’s no hurry – enjoy the journey!

Today: Be grateful. Learn from experiences.

Today: There are supports in my network of friends.

Be Kind / Be Present

Often, I forget exactly what day of the week it is as one day blends into the next. On one such occasion I decided to rename the days of the week as follows:

- **Someday**
- **Presentday**
- **Happyday**
- **Mindfulday**
- **Newday**
- **Goodday**
- **Brightday**

Unlike a typical week, there can be more than one day with the same title; i.e., there could be two Happydays in a row. Perhaps, the day begins as Newday and ends up as Happyday.

Be Kind / Be Present

Welcome to **any day**;
Closely related to **some day**;
A lot like **every day**;
And yet like **no day**.

Anything might happen;
Something is bound to happen;
Everything in its own time;
Nothing is certain.

Good events could happen **anywhere**;
They are certainly happening **somewhere**;
There are common events **everywhere**;
The exact events will happen **nowhere**.

Dementia can happen to **anyone**;
Dementia will happen to **someone**;
The future of Dementia needs **everyone**;
The effects of Dementia will escape **no one**.

Any place can claim to be a good place;
Some places are actually good places;
Every place can't be **THE** best place;
No place is like home, which could be the best place.

Anybody could be a care partner;
Somebody must be a care partner;
Everybody should support care partners;
Nobody can replace a loved one as a primary care partner.

Telling Her Story

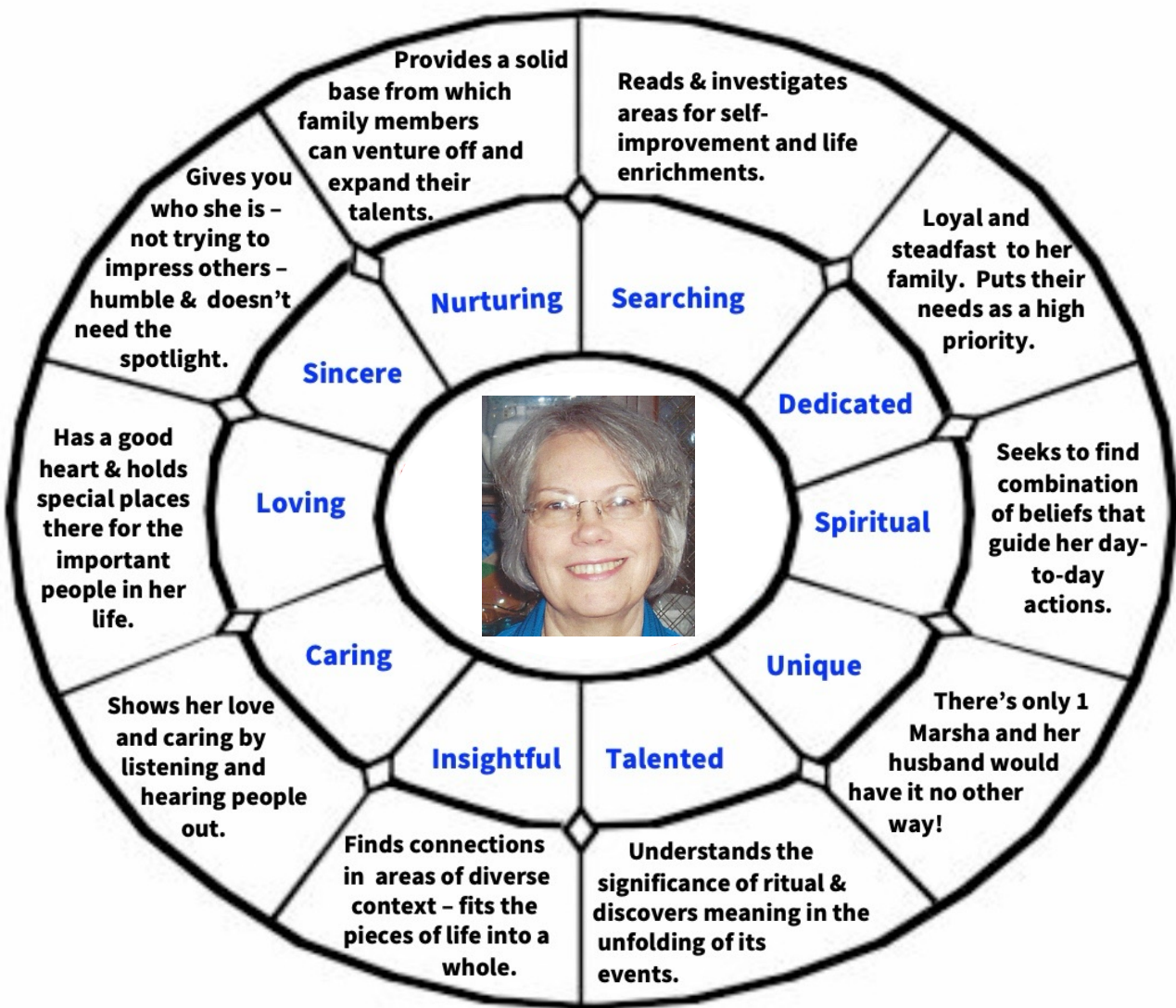
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Telling Her Story

Who is Marsha?



Humor/Wisdom

Men think they can do everything.

Woman know they can do anything.

Marsha said this as she was frustrated with me.

This is enough for right now. There's too many men in here.

Marsha said this as I wasn't helping her in the way she wanted.

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Humor/Wisdom

Ernie: *It's a little cold to go outside in your nightgown.*

Marsha: *I could say a few things about you.*

Marsha: *I seem to make everything a mess.*

Ernie: *When was the last time you did that?*

Marsha: *I don't know yet.*

Marsha: *When did we know who we were?*

Ernie: *That's a great question!* I quickly realized that Marsha wanted to know when we first met and I reminded her. I like her original phrasing.

Ernie: *Some stores/places are closed and some are open today. Where would you like to go?.*

Marsha: *Some place that's open.*

Humor/Wisdom



**If I would just
remember this truth
each day, events
would unfold in a
more positive
manner!**

Marsha: *You may be
right some of the time,
but I'm right all the
time!*

**Gamache is speaking
to Beauvoir about the
four statements that
lead to wisdom:**

- *I'm sorry.*
- *I was wrong*
- *I don't know.*
- *I need help.*

**Louise Penny, *A World of
Curiosities*, p. 19**

In Summary

After all is said and done,
this much I know is true:

THERE IS NO
"ANSWER"
BUT THERE ARE MANY

choices reactions
suggestions
responses options
Questions Ideas
thoughts
strategies feelings
approaches beliefs
connections