

On the Path of a Perfecting Care Partner

Perceptions Along the Way

Version 4

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Inno **C** ence

Understanding the L **A** yers

Sur **R** ender

New Way of D **E** fining Dementia

Wisdom from Louise **P** enny

Char **A** cteristics

Promoting Pe **R** sonhood

On Neu **T** ral Ground

I **N** sights

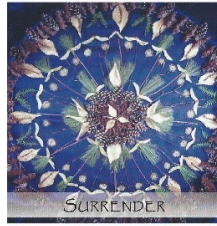
What Do I G **E** t Out of It?

The Soul of Ca **R** e

*** A member of the LiveWell Speaker's Bureau and a
member of the Empowering Partnership Network**

Meditation Card

Surrender



Instead of defining surrender as “giving up,” I am using this term as “letting go.”

Let go of a need for predictable routines.
Embrace acts of improvisation.

Let go of a fear of the unknown for an unwanted disease.
Embrace the essence of Marsha’s identity.

Let go of dreading making mistakes.
Embrace the journey of making new discoveries.

Let go of sadness.
Embrace memories that brought us to this current moment.

Let go of a need to be perfect.
Embrace the process of perfecting my supports.

Let go of self criticism.
Embrace reflection.

Let go of doing it alone.
Embrace sharing with a support group.

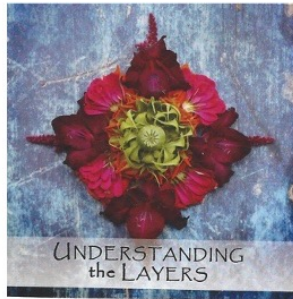
***Image of the Meditation Card used with permission
from www.naturemandala.com***

What Do I Get Out of It?

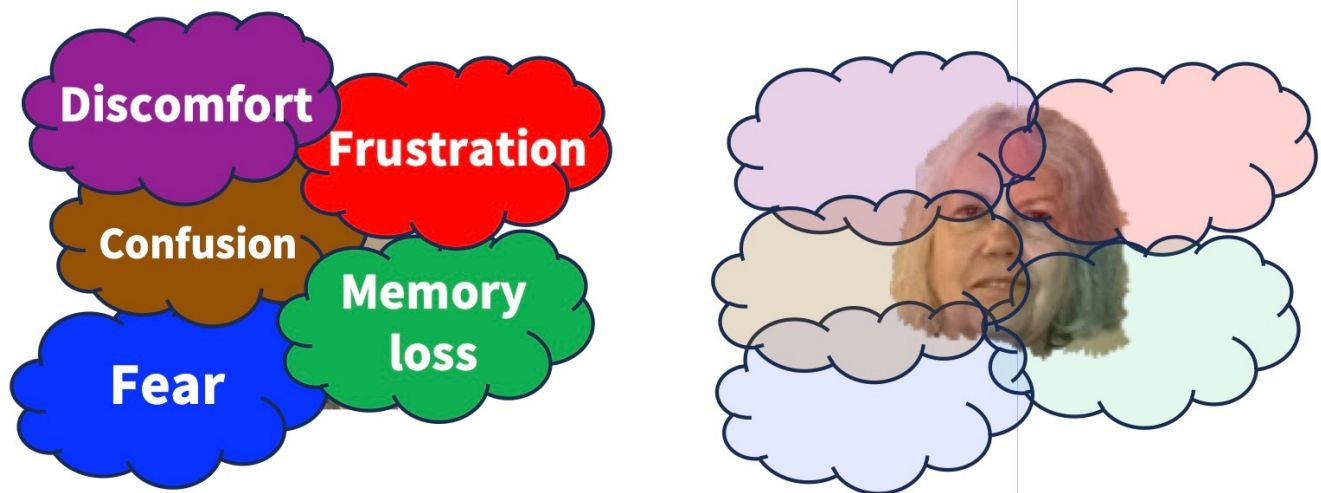
- **Tender moments of appreciation for all Marsha has done for me throughout the past 48 years;**
- **Continual awareness of the moment;**
- **Creative outlet for discovering the gentlest approach to agitated behaviors;**
- **Sharing my journey with others and benefiting from the wisdom of their feedback;**
- **Reflecting on what means the most in my life: relationships;**
- **A need to slow down;**
- **Process is greater than any result;**
- **Internal pat on the back for making it through another day content and pleased with events as they unfolded;**
- **Sense of completeness: a closing of the circle of love that spirals upward;**
- **Wonderment at the “essence” of Marsha.**

Meditation Card

Understanding the Layers



I am going to interpret this heading as layers of clouds that hide the essence of Marsha. Her essence is always there but is clouded over by such characteristics as confusion, fear, memory loss, frustration, discomfort. I like using the image of the sun, which is always there but can lose its visibility when thick layers of clouds obscure its view. Through my interactions with Marsha, I can lessen the thickness of the clouds by the way in which I provide supports. I will not eliminate those confounding characteristics that affect her, but I can diminish their impact to bring out her essence.



*Image of the Meditation Card used with permission
from www.naturemandala.com*

Focus We Bring to the Care Partnership Experience

**Loss of Personhood
Dependency
Nothing to Offer**

**Promoting Personhood
Interdependency
Co-Create Healthy Relationships**

Dependency Expectations Develop Interdependence

A Lost Adventure Enrichment of What Is

Doom and Gloom Meaningful Times Together

Dreadful Fate Enduring Love and Connection

Sadness and Depression New Sense of “Normal”

Dwell on What Was Lost Thankful For What Still Is

A Lost You and I Welcome a New “US”

Missing Parts of Marsha Access to Marsha’s Essence

12 Characteristics of Being a Care Partner

Calm in Difficult Times

Companion and Friend

Capability to Continue Growing

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

A Very Non-Technical Definition of Dementia

Dementia results in a change in what a loved one's brain is now capable of doing, without the loss of the essence of who that person is. Time spent between care partners/loved ones is a process of rediscovering the values and commitment they share and can be a time of great insight and love represented in ways unique to each person.

On Neutral Ground

When we meet elders with dementia for the first time without our knowledge of their past life of achievements and struggles, all are viewed on a level playing field: valued for being in our presence for the essential “being” who they are. There is a clean slate for our interactions with their current life. We focus on the now. This is mindfulness in one of its truest forms.

(This reflection was influenced by a posting on Substack by Courtney Martin when visiting her dad in a community where elders with dementia live.)

Insights in a Burger King Parking Lot (March 30, 2026)

**I've had my Impossible Burger and medium drink
And pulled out paper to write down what I think
About my priorities and what's next in my life
A year or so since the passing of Marsha, my wife.
The weather is finally getting a little warmer
As I reminisce about the prior five years when her
Life was nearing the end of the line.
Am I really getting any closer to fine?
The experience of being a caregiver can abound
With times of quiet and times that astound
Me when mindfulness becomes the norm
To determine how the activities form
A routine for us to experience
And determine what the significance
Of life is all about.
It's more of a whisper than a shout**

Insights in a Burger King Parking Lot (March 30, 2026)

(continued)

**Of being in each other's company.
There was no great epiphany
In which to understand our fate.
These were times to love and times to hate
The cruel nature of what dementia brings.
However, amid its stress are also unexpected things
Like joy and blessed times to be together.
We learned to thrive amid the stormy weather
Of unexpected challenges each and every day.
Looking back, I would have to say
The experience provided me with insights and more
Thanks to Marsha's core
Of integrity, resiliency and inner beauty.
Caregiving was much more than a husband's duty.
I discovered much about who I am and want to be
In the remaining years that are left for me.**

Rest I ng

Bewilderme N t

Confusio N

W O nder

Pea C e

Tender 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.*

Wisdom from Louise Penny

It had taken Beauvoir years to see the power of pausing. And of patience. Of taking a breath to consider all options, all angles, and not simply acting on the most obvious.

Consider these three questions prior to speaking:

Is it true?

Is it kind?

Does it need to be said?

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

I'm sorry.

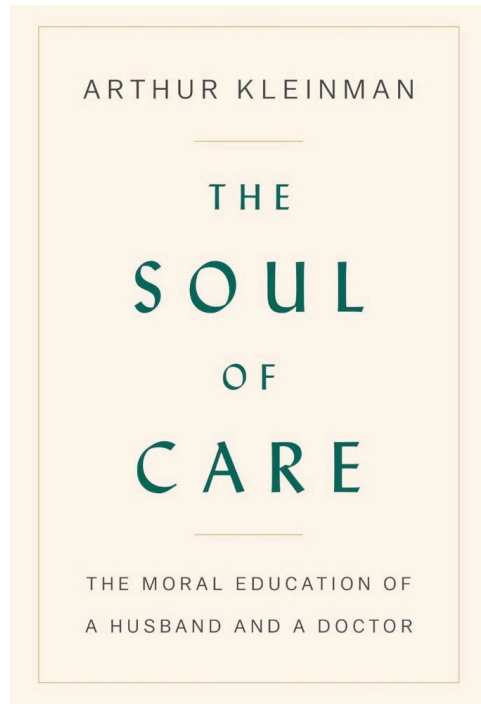
I was wrong.

I don't know.

I need help.

A Brief Note to Lousie Penny

Thank you for providing me with hours and hours of reading pleasure as a care partner for my wife who lives with dementia. Your personal connection with this condition endears me to your writing. You have provided needed respite during stressful times as I am immersed with the characters you develop throughout the sequence of your novels. (sent to U.S. publisher)



- *You do it because it is there to do. It was part of the deal – you know, the marriage vows, the way you lived your life together over the decades. You do it! (p. 177)*
- *There are no simple conclusions, and no universal answers. All we can do is dig deeply into each illness experience to identify and cherish what matters most to each individual and in each relationship. (p. 179)*