

Commandments for Caregiving

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Doing your best, no more nor less.

You can clutch the past so tightly to your chest
that it leaves your arms too full to embrace the present. - Jan Glidewell

The problem is not the problem.
Your problem is your attitude about the problem.

Patience is the companion of wisdom.” ~ St. Augustine

Caregiver Commandments

- Thou shall know that everyone is different.
- Thou shalt listen with your mind, body, and soul.
- Thou shall say Yes and...
- Thou shalt take care of oneself.
- Thou shalt not dwell in the house of guilt (or
- Thou shalt breath properly.
- Thou shalt start from a place of normal
- Thou shalt be creative
- Thou shalt change your behavior when necessary
- Thou shalt use all types of communication
- Thou shalt know you are full of awesomesauce.

Thou shalt be CREATIVE.

- **Creativity predicts a longer life.** Research published in *Journal of Aging and Health*, “researchers found that only creativity—not intelligence or overall openness—decreased mortality risk. One possible reason creativity is protective of health is because it draws on a variety of neural networks within the brain.” James Clear cites studies and research that demonstrate creating art decreases negative emotions, reduces stress and anxiety, and improved medical outcomes. Not only can being creative help you live longer, but it can improve your quality of health and life too.
- **Solve problems.** Being creative helps you become a better problem solver in all areas of your life and work. Instead of coming from a linear, logical approach, your creative side can approach a situation from all angles. Creativity helps you see things differently and better deal with uncertainty. Studies show that creative people are better able to live with uncertainty because they can adapt their thinking to allow for the flow of the unknown.

- **Develop confidence.** Being creative comes with many ups and downs and a high risk of failure. You have to be vulnerable to share your art, and willing to take the risk that what you create may never see the light of the day. Engaging in the creative process is a great confidence builder, because you discover that failure is part of the process. Once we see failure as something that is survivable, and something that helps us grow and that it makes our work better, we can release the fear and try new things even at the risk of failing.

“Creativity is intelligence having fun.” – Albert Einstein

“Creativity is inventing, experimenting, growing, taking risks, breaking rules, making mistakes, and having fun.” – Mary Lou Cook

” Creativity is the quality that you bring to the activity that you are doing. It is an attitude, an inner approach – how you look at things . . . Whatsoever you do, if you do it joyfully, if you do it lovingly, if your act of doing is not purely economical, then it is creative.” – Osho

Thou shalt move so you DO NOT HURT thyself.

1. Warm up

Perform stretches to warm up your body prior to working with you will be helping. arm circles, squats, neck stretches, back stretches...etc.

2. Ask yourself, “Can I do this safely?”

Can you move/lift/lower/push what you have to, with no possibility of hurting yourself? No? Get help. Yes? Go for it.

3. Check your feet

Your feet are your foundation. Be solid in your stance. Your feet should be shoulder width apart.

4. Check *above* your feet

You should be facing whomever or whatever you are moving with your back straight.

5. Don’t do the twist

If your hips are facing one way and your shoulders another you are setting yourself up to be hurt.

6. Keep your center of gravity low.

Bend at the knees and keep your shoulders above your waist

7. Lift with the legs.

Avoid lifting with the arms. The hands and arms hold what your legs are much stronger and should do the work.

8. Get a little closer

The closer you hold what or whom you lift the better. This keeps the weight closer to your center making it safer and easier.

9. Push, Pull, Lift

Lifting should be your last option. Try and see if you can push what you have to move if not then maybe pull. If neither of those two will work only then should you choose to lift.

10. Reach? Nope.

If you have to reach out to move something or someone then you are about to hurt yourself.

11. Clear your path

Before moving anything or anyone clear the way you will be traveling.

Adapted from Independence Plus Health Care at Home

Thou shall know that everyone is different.

Grief is the natural response when someone you love is torn from your life. It is a natural process: a process of the heart being smashed and broken open, of reality shifting and hurling in place. It cares nothing for order or stages.

The truth is, you can't force an order on pain. You can't make it tidy or predictable. The stages of grief are a net thrown over a fogbank — they help neither to define nor contain.

To do grief “well” depends solely on individual experience. It means listening to your own reality. It means acknowledging pain and love and loss. It means allowing the truth of these things the space to exist without any artificial tethers or stages or requirements.

There is no set pattern, not for everyone and not even within each person. Each grief is unique, as each love is unique. There are no stages capable of containing all the experiences of love and pain. There are no stages of grief.

Here are some things to remember:

- There is no finish line. This is not a race. Grief has its own lifespan, unique to you.

- There is no time when pain and grief are completed; you grieve because you love, and love is part of you. Love changes but does not end.
- What will happen, what can happen, as you allow your grief, is that you will move differently with pain. It shifts and changes: sometimes heavy, sometimes light.
- Anger will happen. So will fear, peace, joy, guilt, confusion, and a range of other things. You will flash back and forth through many feelings, often several of them at once.
- Sometimes you will be tired of grief. You will turn away. And you'll turn back. And you'll turn away. Grief has a rhythm of its own.
- Grief can be absolutely crazy making. This does not mean you are crazy.
- There is no way to do grief "wrong." It may be painful, but it is never wrong.

Remember that there is no "closure." Grief is part of love, and love evolves. Even acceptance is not final: It continuously shifts and changes.

The truth is, you will seize up in the face of pain and soften into it, again and again, both things in rapid succession, and both things with silence in between. You'll find ways to live inside your grief, and in doing so, it will find its own right place.

Your love, and your grief, are bigger than any stage could ever be. The only way to contain it is to let it be free.

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Thou shalt BREATHE properly.

The diaphragm is the large, dome-shaped muscle at the base of the lungs. When you allow your diaphragm to expand and contract to control your breathing, you'll breathe more easily and efficiently.

1. Sit comfortably, with your knees bent and your shoulders, head and neck relaxed.
2. Breathe in slowly through your nose so that your stomach moves out against your hand. The hand on your chest should remain as still as possible.
3. Place one hand on your upper chest and the other just below your rib cage. This will allow you to feel your diaphragm move as you breathe.

4. Tighten your stomach muscles, letting them fall inward as you exhale through pursed lips (see "Pursed Lip Breathing Technique"). The hand on your upper chest must remain as still as possible.

Note: You may notice an increased effort will be needed to use the diaphragm correctly. At first, you'll probably get tired while doing this exercise. But keep at it, because with continued practice, diaphragmatic breathing will become easy and automatic.

Thou shalt not dwell in the house of Guilt.

If you're the kind of person prone to guilt, learn to manage guilt so that guilt serves you rather than imprisons you. Here are eight tips for managing your caregiver guilt:

Recognize the feeling of guilt: Unrecognized guilt eats at your soul. Name it; look at the monster under the bed.

Identify other feelings: Often, there are feelings under the feeling of guilt. Name those, too. For example, say to yourself: "I hate to admit this to myself, but I'm resentful that Dad's illness changed all of our lives." Once you put it into words, you will have a new perspective. You will also be reminding yourself of how fortunate you are to have what it takes to take care of loved one."

Be compassionate with yourself: Cloudy moods, like cloudy days, come and go. There's no one way a caregiver should feel. When you give yourself permission to have any feeling, and recognize that your feelings don't control your actions, your guilt will subside.

Look for the cause of the guilt: What is the mismatch between this "Ideal You" and the real you? Do you have an unmet need? Do you need to change your actions so that they align with your values?

Take action: Meet your needs. Needs are not bad or good; they just are. If you need some time alone, find someone to be with your loved one.

Change your behavior to fit your values: For example, Clara felt guilty because her friend was in the hospital and she didn't send a card. Her guilt propelled her to buy some beautiful blank cards to make it easier for her to drop a note the next time.

Ask for help: Call a friend and say, "I'm going through a hard time. Do you have a few minutes just to listen?" Have a family meeting and say, "Our lives have been a lot

different since grandma got sick. I'm spending more time with her. Let's figure out together how we'll get everything done."

Understand that you will be a more effective caregiver when you care for the caregiver first. Loved ones neither want nor expect selfless servants. As a caregiver, when you care for yourself, you increase and improve your own caring. Yes, guilt is part of caregiving, but this guilt can help you become the caregiver you and your loved one want you to be.

Thou shalt listen with your mind, body, and soul.

1. A good listener is attentive. They make good eye contact, don't interrupt what the other person is saying and show an interest in what is being communicated. There's always something incredible you can hear in anyone's story.
2. A good listener does not look over the shoulder of the person that's speaking, waiting for someone more interesting to come along.
3. A good listener does not check their phone or tablet in the middle of a conversation, when someone is sharing with them.
4. A good listener is not waiting for their chance to get a word in, treating the 'period of listening' as a pause in their 'monologue.' Being so focused on trying to get one's view over is insensitive and misses the real value in the conversation.
5. A good listener uses positive body language; leaning forward and showing an enthusiastic, relaxed nature. They don't fidget, cross arms, look elsewhere or express inappropriate shock or disbelief at what's shared.
6. A good listener does not hurry somebody but asks good questions to guide the sharing. They guide and help shape what's being shared, but if the other person feels cut off or squashed, they've failed.
7. A good listener does not approach a conversation with prejudice, expecting to know what's going to come out of the speaker's lips. They don't listen with a pre-formed opinion but attempt to have an open mind to what's being communicated. It's amazing how much time is wasted with the belief that people understand what someone means without taking the effort and time to listen.
8. A good listener cares. They show empathy for what the other person has to say. It's genuine, authentic and comes from a place of truthful concern.
9. A good listener knows how to treat what is shared with confidentiality. They are trustworthy and sensitive with information and never look to use anything that is shared for any purpose other than good.

Thou shalt find and use ways to make your life easier.

Look at Amazon.com or a Home Improvement Store

Motion detected toilet light

Safety rails: Bathroom/Shower/Hallways/Next to bed/Any stairs

Motion detector

Dry erase boards

Appliance Locks

Seat Belt grabber

Seat Swivel Cushion

Stander Handy Bar (& Seat belt cutter and window breaker)



ALSO See Be Creative

Thou shall say YES AND. (especially to help)

"Yes" means accepting an idea for exactly what it is worth, regardless from where it came; regardless of what it means; and regardless of what you think it means based on from where it came.

"And" means taking that idea and building directly off of it, without trying to forcibly change it or inject an individual agenda.

Yes and I would love for you to come over to help, will you call me tomorrow so I can have time to figure out when?

Thou shalt practice self-care.

What Are the Symptoms of Caregiver Burnout?

The symptoms of caregiver burnout are similar to the symptoms of stress and depression. They may include:

- Withdrawal from friends and family
- Loss of interest in activities previously enjoyed
- Feeling blue, irritable, hopeless, and helpless
- Changes in appetite, weight, or both
- Changes in sleep patterns
- Getting sick more often
- Feelings of wanting to hurt yourself or the person for whom you are caring
- Emotional and physical exhaustion
- Excessive use of alcohol and/or sleep medications
- Irritability

Self-Care

For your physical health:

- Eat healthy foods.
- Get enough sleep.
- Go for a daily walk.
- Take your medications as prescribed.
- Keep preventive medical appointments.
- See your doctor when you're sick.

For your emotional health, make a list of small, simple things that bring you joy and energy. Then try to do at least one of those things every day. Everyone's list will be different, but here are some examples to get you started:

- Connect with friends.
- Listen to soothing or energizing music.
- Play with kids or pets.
- Tend a garden.
- Work on a hobby.
- Relax with meditation.

Self Care

Self Care isn't always about lush bath bombs, \$20 facial masks or bars of dark chocolate. Sometimes, it's about going to bed at 8:00pm or letting go of a bad friend. It's forgiving yourself for not meeting your impossible standards and understanding you are worth it, nonetheless. Self-care isn't always a luxury, but a mean for survival.

Thou shalt know you are full of awesomesauce.

"Don't let negative and toxic people rent space in your head.
Raise the rent and kick them out." — Robert Tew

"You can't be strong all the time.
Sometimes you just need to be alone and let your tears flow." — Unknown Author

"Be strong, but not rude. Be kind, but not weak. Be bold, but don't bully. Be humble, but not shy. Be proud, but not arrogant." — Jim Rohn

"The best use of imagination is creativity. the worst use of imagination is anxiety."
— Deepak Chopra

"Being a little weird is just a natural side effect of being awesome."
- Sue Fitzmaurice

Don't forget you're human. It's okay to have a meltdown, just don't unpack and live there. Cry it out and then refocus on where you are headed.

DISCLAIMER: Content in the live workshop or in these handouts is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical (physical, mental or emotional) advice.