



5 Things

Newsletter



Corley Caregiver Consulting, LLC

**Hello friends and a warm welcome if you're new here!
I'm so glad you've joined us!**

Throughout each month, I pull together the 5 main ideas or resources that have helped me in my own caregiving journey. I don't always find a theme for each list, but this month appears to be different.

February is the month of love and I can see that thread stitched throughout this month's list. I'd like to say I've intentionally planned it that way, but that's not the case. We can always use more love, wouldn't you say?

Now on to our 5 Things for this month!

This month we're talking about 5 Things bringing me.....

- 1. A Renewed Feeling of Love and Support**
- 2. A Resource to Help Me When Times Get Tough**
- 3. Movements to Lift Me Up**
- 4. A Way to Recognize Important Relationships in my Life**
- 5. Strategies to Improve Focus (Book Recommendation)**

**1. A Renewed Feeling of Love and Support - Birthdays
are to be Celebrated!**

It's the end of February, my birthday month. By the time you read this I'll officially be a member of Club 51, as my good friend calls it. It's really hard for me to believe I'm 51. I certainly don't feel 51. I don't really think about age so when I do, I'm a bit startled that I'm 51.

2 things about birthdays for me: they're too short and they are an amazing reminder of the love and good people in your life.

I'm a huge fan of birthdays. I know most people blow them off as just another day, but not me. I find birthdays to be special because it's the day YOU were born. No one is like you. That makes you pretty special and that's worth celebrating.

I've often found celebrating on just one day seems too fast. We pack everything into one day and then, *boop* done! It left me with "birthday let down" at times, if I'm being honest.

My family and I started a new tradition a few years ago after we realized that a day is not nearly enough to celebrate a person you love and care about. It's not about being the center of attention or gifts. It's about celebration and reveling in each person's spirit and what they bring to your life. So we started a "birthday week". Each day we saw each other leading up to the person's actual birthday, we'd give a gift or have one of their favorite meals. We use the week long celebration for major milestones like decades or half decades (60,65, etc.). For the in-between years, we start a few days before.

It's really become a fun experience for all of us, both the gift givers and the person of honor. We've had special meals, played games, watched the person of honor's favorite movie. We focus those days (or week) on that person and what would make the celebration special to them. Sometimes the activities even go beyond their actual birthday. All in all, it's become a really fun tradition that I've passed on to a lot of friends who've started doing it themselves. So, I pass it along to you here as well in the hopes that it helps create a fun new tradition in your families as well.

This year in particular my birthday arrived and, as I've mentioned in past newsletters, I found myself silently feeling weighed down from the negativity and ugliness in the world. I was not prepared for the perfect timing of my birthday this year. I awoke to the sound of texts from friends arriving in my phone. Facebook had a constant stream of birthday wishes and I have to admit I was overwhelmed. It was a beautiful reminder of the love and goodness that's around me in the world. It truly created an amazing shift mentally for me. Friends I hadn't seen in years remembered to send messages. My heart was

incredibly full.

Whether you're a birthday a lover or not, I would encourage you to sit in the wishes anyway. They are a reminder that you're loved and thought of. In a busy world full of responsibilities and the weight of the world, we can all start to feel isolated, lonely and forgotten. It's in those small moments where we find a little something special to boost us along in our journey. I encourage you to sit with it and let it sink in.

2. A Resource to Help Me When Times Get Tough

As caregivers, we manage many complicated emotions: overwhelm, anxiety, loneliness, just to name a few. I believe the best solutions are already inside of us. The solutions, however, need to be considered BEFORE we find ourselves in that place. Wouldn't it be great to have a resource available you could refer to when you land in a difficult spot? Well, I have a resource that just might help!

Not long ago, I stumbled upon the idea of a Daily Healing Plan. The concept was developed by Denise Brown, who's worked with family caregivers since 1990. The plan is specific to you and something you create on your own as a resource to help you through challenging days as a caregiver. Here's who it works.

The "recipe", so to speak, has 3 parts:

Healing from _____

Healing with _____

Healing to _____

The "healing from" is typically the emotion you're struggling with in a given day that you need to heal from. It could be overwhelm, disappointment, exhaustion, anger, fatigue, loneliness, etc.

"Healing with" refers to the activities you feel would help you manage the emotion you're struggling with in a given day. These might be: take a walk, work in your garden, call a friend, read a book, take a nap, work a crossword puzzle, cry, etc.

"Healing to" means the desired result you want to reach by doing the activities above. For example, giving myself space to clear my head; helping me remember I'm not alone and people care about me; giving myself time to stop being busy all the time, etc.

I'll share a few I've come up with for myself to help get you started.

_When I feel overwhelmed, I'll create space for myself by taking a walk to disconnect from all my to-do's and clear my mind. _

When I'm feeling disappointed, I'll write in my gratitude journal to help me remember all the good things that are happening for me in spite of my disappointment.

The goal of this exercise is to create short lists for each emotion or struggle you might face and have those solutions ready when you need them. Here's what my lists look like:

Healing from:

- Overwhelm
 - Slow down my pace and focus on fewer things
 - Create a shorter to-do list (do less)
 - Calm my mind by sitting in silence
 - Take a walk
 - Get my hands busy to give my brain a break
- Disappointment
 - Gratitude journal entry of what's working for me
 - Journal my feelings to get them out and validate them

While your "healing from" list could be infinite, I chose to start with the emotions and feelings I recognize that happen frequently for me. As new ones arise, I can create a list for those as well.

You might also find that some of your "healing with" ideas appear as a solution for multiple emotions. Slowing down by sitting in silence and taking a walk show up in several categories for me because I've recognized how they benefit me when I'm on overload.

The exercise takes some reflection to create "healing with" ideas that are specific to you, but it is a great exercise in realizing you can create solutions for yourself for those moments that often feel unsolvable.

The beauty of this exercise is, if you have a list ready to refer to, you'll be more likely to take action in those moments because you've already determined your solutions. Just refer to your list, and select an action that works in your day or moment. And better yet, you created it! Who knows you better than you!

3. Movements to Lift Me Up

I first became familiar with Kathy Murri through the caregiver coaching program where I received my certification in 2020. She hosts grief support groups for caregivers and offers movement classes for managing grief, building confidence in yourself and honoring your own spirit. I know it might sound a little "woo woo" for some, but I would encourage you to keep an open mind because it's really a very powerful experience in its simplicity.

I've been lucky to sit through 2 of her movement presentations and I am always left moved, comforted and uplifted by them. She has a few different videos on YouTube which you can find by searching her name, Kathy Murri. I'm including a link below for you to enjoy.

[Caring Conference - How to Be Your Own Best Friend - Kathy Murri](#)

I would encourage you to take a few minutes for yourself, keep an open mind and give her ideas a try. They are simple and can be used at any time of the day to help keep you grounded and comforted regardless of the caregiving situation you find yourself managing.

4. A Way to Recognize Important Relationships in my Life - Relationship Awards

I am a productivity lover (OK, more like a nerd) and I've been using tools from a company called Ink and Volt. They recently shared a really fun exercise in an e-newsletter pertaining to awarding the relationships in your life.

Here's why I love this idea so much. As caregivers, our circumstances can land us in a position of isolation or loneliness. The value of friendships can't be underestimated. As humans we need connection. As caregivers, we need to feel seen and heard and who better to do that than good friends.

For this exercise, think of someone in your life to "award" with the following "titles".

* Best Virtual Buddy

- * Most Fun to Be With
- * Most Improved Relationship
- * My Rock & Confidant
- * Most Successful
- * The Comedian
- * Most Inspirational
- * The Zen Master
- * Dearly Missed
- * Needed Me Most
- * Most Wise + Experienced
- * Biggest Health Nut
- * Most Organized

Reflect on each person and how they impact your story. Then, present them with their award! This is a great way to show love to the important relationships in your life. It also helps you recognize who's in your corner, the knowledge base you have available to tap into and the support that surrounds you. When you are feeling down, maybe it's time to call "The Comedian" in your life. When you can't get away and need to connect, maybe it's time to call your "Best Virtual Buddy". This would be a great addition to your "Daily Healing Plan" mentioned above, as well.

5. Strategies to Improving Focus (Book Recommendation)

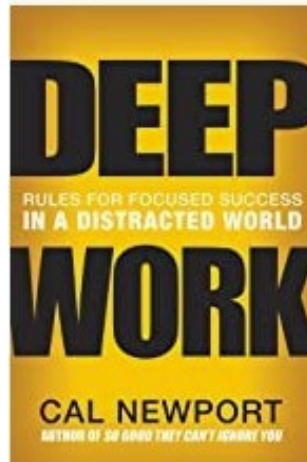
As caregivers, we live a very reactionary life. Our tasks are often 'shallow tasks' that, while they create value, don't require a lot of focus to do. Living like that on a consistent basis actually makes it difficult to really do deep focused work, which for many of us is very important as we're likely holding down a full time job in conjunction with caregiving.

When we need to really focus, our brain revolts and makes us crave shallow tasks because they are familiar. In the "craving" moments, we're often drawn to checking email, checking social media, searching online, those valueless activities that distract us from what we really need to do. We have great reasons why we need to be doing these tasks all the time, but what I've learned is this is actually a dopamine addiction that leads us to feeling overwhelmed, frustrated and further behind with each passing hour.

We shouldn't beat ourselves up about this. I'll be the first to share I'm guilty of it and have found it is a major cause of my overwhelm most of the time. Too many outside sources are pulling at my consciousness, causing mental noise

which gets to be too much for me after a while.

We're all victim to this because of the technology that's part of our lives and how it affects our drives and desires. We don't, however, have to remain in a cycle of shallow tasks. Again, we have the power to create a new reality for ourselves. A great resource to help you make change is a book named Deep Work by Cal Newport.



Deep Work by Cal Newport

Much like the Daily Healing Plan lists above, we can create rules for ourselves that allow us to spend more time in focused work rather than disjointed, distracted spurts throughout our day.

Fair warning, it will require discipline and won't be easy initially. Bad habits are difficult to break, but not impossible. I highly suggest you start small.

One of my favorite ideas shared in the book is blocking Deep Work time on your calendar. Create a space without distractions where all you have with you are the necessary items for your task at hand. No technology (unless you need it for the task) and remove any obstacles that would keep you from working on your specific task.

I've chosen our guest room as my focus place. It's smaller, cozy, comfortable and totally vacant of distractions unlike my office desk area. Some may choose going to the library, a coffee shop, a park bench; the "where" doesn't matter so much as the environment that surrounds that area. It should be conducive to focus and concentration.

I always encourage the idea of starting small so start with 30 minutes, 60 minutes, or whatever amount of time is feasible for you. Don't plan a 4 hour

block the first time you try this. It will take time to work your brain into concentration after so long working in shallow tasks. Don't beat yourself up. It's completely normal. It's like going to the gym the first time and expecting to lift the heaviest weight there. Crazy, right!? This is no different.

This book will teach you that you have power within your grasp to make positive changes in your mental wellbeing.



That's a wrap for this month, friends.

If one piece of information here supports, empowers, or makes you feel less alone in your caregiving journey, I am beyond thrilled.

As you implement any of the ideas, please share that with me. I'd love to hear from you! I certainly don't have all the answers, but together we get stronger and smarter.

If you know someone who would enjoy this newsletter, please share it! The more the merrier!

Also, if I can support you in your own caregiving journey, please message me. I'd love to hear your story.

I'm always here to remind you that you are not alone and you can do difficult things.

Wishing you peace in all that is and strength to keep you moving forward.

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