



5 Things

Newsletter



Corley Caregiver Consulting, LLC

Hello friends and a warm welcome if you're new here!

It's officially the end of April. How can this be!? This year is just flying by. I hope you're enjoying Spring wherever this finds you.

As with every newsletter, I'm back again to share 5 things that have helped me on my caregiving journey over the past month. I do this in the hopes one of them will be a golden nugget of help, support or entertainment for you in your own journey.

I invite you to email me if you have found resources, routines or ideas that work for you. I'd love to include them. My goal is to make this newsletter more than just a one way communication. I believe we all have something to learn from each other.

Now on to our 5 Things for this month!

1. A Personal Care Product Recommendation

I'll start with a disclaimer. I get no kick back from promoting this product, but I'm honestly so impressed I feel like shouting it from the roof tops.

I have a sister with developmental disabilities. In addition, she's non-ambulatory. When she's laying down, she uses the top of her head to pivot and roll over. That, along with other positioning preferences, results in an area on the back of head where her hair is tangled and dry. Our fear has always been

she'll develop a bald spot in this area, so are always on the hunt for better hair care products.



It is our rule that she always present herself in her light despite her limitations and disabilities. That's why this has been a crusade for us throughout her life. It wasn't until recently that we discovered Carol's Daughter products. I don't know exactly what their magic is, but it's been a remarkable product.



Carol's Daughter Hair Care

From the first use, we noticed a difference in the overall look and texture of her hair. We've tried for years to find something that would nourish and protect her hair from breakage. This line of products has been a game changer.

I share this because if your caree also spends a lot of time sitting reclined or laying down, it will typically show in their hair. We all want to make those we care for feel their best regardless of limitations. Something as simple as having

a hair care solution can make a big difference. It might make your caree feel better and, as strange as it may sound, it makes one area of providing care for them easier for you, the caregiver. We all want small wins within a larger game.

These products appear to be readily available as I found them in my local grocery store. They're not super pricey, but a bit more than typical hair products. The beauty is we continue to see their benefit just using them a couple of times each week so if the expense is an issue for you, keep in mind it's not necessarily something you need to use daily.

I hope you have an opportunity to try them, and even more, I hope they offer you a solution you've been looking or didn't know you needed.

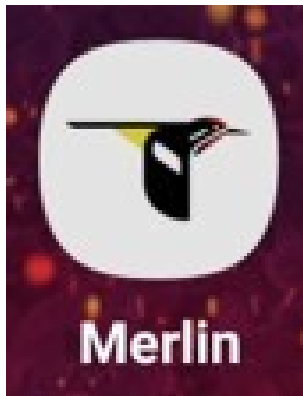
2. The Cornell Lab Ornithology Bird Identifying Apps

I've spent the last few years perfecting my ability to notice what gives me energy so I can tap into it when needed. One of my favorite things is sitting in nature and just watching and listening.

I've adopted the hobby of improving my ability to recognize birds and their calls. Since we moved to the country nearly 3 years ago, we have significantly less noise around us so we can appreciate all the bird sounds. I've found this hobby has fed both my curiosity and my connection to nature which has been so calming for me.

I have 2 bird apps on my phone I use exclusively. Both allow you to record a bird call, analyze it and then identify it, as well as identify a bird from a photo. While their features are similar, their methods are different hence my use of both of them. BirdNET allows you to record sounds and isolate one for identification, which I love. Merlin will record all the sounds and give you a list of what it hears.

Both are developed by the Cornell Ornithology Lab and work on both iPhone or Android. They are very intuitive and so enjoyable to use. They're a great tool for noticing bird migrations throughout the change of seasons as well.



Cornell Lab Merlin App



Cornell Lab - BirdNET Sound ID app

I find them to be a great asset when I need to step away for a break in my caregiving routine. Just 5 minutes outside can be an adventure in curiosity and a helpful distraction from whatever is weighing on you.

3. Gratitude for the Beauty of Friendships

As April comes to an end, I find myself looking back with an exceptional level of gratitude. You see, a lot happened this month.

After 3 years of dodging it, COVID caught up to us. Because our family has members considered to be “vulnerable”, we’ve taken significant precautions since COVID arrived in 2020. It’s unpredictability of whether you’ll get significantly or minorly ill has been our biggest concern.

Having no idea how we contracted it, 3 of the 5 in our family became ill. My husband and father had the most significant symptoms while mine were mild, although still not pleasant.

Because we isolated out of caution for my Mom and sister (who didn’t test positive), it became a rapid reminder of how interconnected we are as a family. My sister’s care had to fall to my Mom while my Dad and I isolated.

It completely killed our normal routine and brought to light just how interconnected we are. It also made us realize what a house of cards a caregiving experience can be. If 1 card falls, it can all fall into shambles.

I'm happy to report we didn't fall into shambles, but we did get discombobulated for a week.

In retrospect, we look upon it with tremendous gratitude for:

- * Speedy recoveries with no lasting effects
- * Friends sending check in texts and calls
- * Neighbors running errands for us
- * A neighbor dropping off food to my Mom and Dad so they wouldn't have to cook

It's really interesting the mental effect isolating in place due to illness can have on you. You feel like you have the plague or a Scarlet A on your chest. And yet it's those small gestures that make us feel connected and loved even from a distance.

Whether you find yourself sick with COVID or living in a caregiving experience that isolates you from friends, I'd encourage you to stay connected in any way you can and take time to drink in those moments of connection, no matter what they look like for you. I have friends I haven't seen in person for years and yet we make it a priority to stay in touch via phone, text, and Facebook messenger. It's not the same as in person, but it still counts as connection. I've even built new relationships that way too. Technology, with all its faults, can also be such a blessing.

It's those small gestures and connections that fill your cup and feed our spirit, especially as caregivers when we can feel very alone and disconnected. It's those connections that help us heal physically and spiritually.

4. A Super Easy Chili Recipe

Given the all-encompassing nature of caregiving, one of the first things we lose is energy. We start each day with a certain amount of energy and by the end of the day it's depleted. I've found in my own personal experience, the part of daily life that gets the short end of the stick (besides house cleaning) is cooking. When I'm tired and burnt out from the day, I want quick and easy meals. There's nothing wrong with that. The problem arises in the fact that quite often quick and easy meal options aren't always the healthiest.

I'm a huge lover of Pinterest, specifically for recipes. It's not only helped me find healthy recipes, but recipes that are easy to prepare and help prevent food boredom (as I call it).

Our family loves chili, but I've always found it cumbersome to make....until I found this recipe. I'm sharing it with you so you can have an easy and healthy meal option in your tool belt. It has simple, inexpensive ingredients that taste far more complicated than the recipe sounds.

The recipe is meatless, but you can add ground beef or ground turkey, if you prefer. If you're not a fan of black beans, I make it quite often with chili beans and it's still a win. Simply mix all the ingredients together in large pot, set the heat on low, stir occasionally and just let it simmer for a few hours (I find the tastes meld together better that way).

It's a tasty meal that keeps on giving with plenty of leftovers for future meals.



15-MINUTE BLACK BEAN SOUP

(From page 15)

Prep: 5 minutes | Cook: 10 minutes | Servings: 6

3 (15.25-ounce) cans black
beans, not drained

½ cup water

24 ounces (3 cups) mild
chunky salsa

1 teaspoon ground cumin

½ teaspoon garlic powder

15-ounce can corn, drained

¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper

Pour black beans into a large pot. Mash about ½ of the beans against the side of the pot. Add in rest of ingredients. Cook over medium heat, stirring regularly. Finish with your favorite toppings, such as corn chips, sour cream, avocado, or cheddar cheese.

Per serving: 559 calories, 7 grams fat (1 gram saturated fat), 0 milligrams cholesterol, 1,310 milligrams sodium, 112 grams total carbohydrates, 24 grams fiber, 26 grams protein.

5. Self Check Ins

This idea dropped in my lap this month while listening to a podcast episode. It goes like this.

Close your eyes for 3 minutes. (Set a timer if you don't have a good sense of what 3 minutes "feels" like. It's longer than you'd think.)

For the first minute and a half, pay specific attention to different areas in your body.

What sensations do you notice and where?

Start with the top of your head and work down. You might notice aching, tension, or maybe those normal sensations are missing today. Make a mental note of what you notice.

For the final minute and a half, focus your attention on how you feel emotionally and spiritually.

Are you anxious about something coming up today or this week?

Are you worried?

Are you tired from poor sleep?

Are you agitated?

Do you feel sad or heavy hearted?

Do you feel light and energized?

Make a mental note of what you notice.

Now for the final 2 minutes of this exercise, write down the feelings or sensations you noticed.

This is an exercise in self awareness and compassion for yourself.

I've been doing this for the past week, since I first learned about it. For me, starting new habits can be a challenge (I'm sure I'm not alone in this) so I set a reminder on my calendar for first thing in the morning and then at the end of the day. I've noticed I look forward to this activity and when I notice something, I feel a sense of compassion settle over me. I feel myself acknowledging my current state of being for what it is. No judgement. No inner voice naysaying. Just acceptance of where I am.

Some feelings I may immediately recognize the reason for, while others I might not. Witnessing and noticing what I'm feeling gives it a name and value. It reminds me I'm human and I'm an emotional being. It also gives me permission to feel what I'm feeling, whether I know the reason for it or not.

There are 2 reasons why I love this exercise so much for caregivers. The first is because we typically put our heads down and power on rarely taking time for ourselves or how we're feeling. This allows us to create a habit for US.

The second, and I believe the most life changing, is it becomes an exercise in acceptance, which can be the ultimate challenge in caregiving. We witness how we're feeling without judgement or self criticism and move forward in our day with that acknowledgement.

Acceptance of situations as they are is a HUGE topic and challenge for us as

caregivers. We often find ourselves in situations we'd rather not be in, didn't ask for and don't align with where we envisioned our lives. It is possible, however, to reach a place of acceptance and small steps can be a solution. Starting where we are is a great place to begin.

Ideas and Takeaways for the Month Ahead

- Sit,
stand
or
walk
in
nature,
even
for
5
minutes.
Observe
what's
going
on
around
you.
Identify
one
or
two
birds
around
you
or
a
new
flower
that's
growing
or
blooming.
Use
this
activity
as
a
way
of
getting
out
of

your
own
head.

- Text,
email
or
phone
a
friend
-
regardless
of
when
you
last
connected
with
them.
Keep
that
connection
alive.
 - Pick
one
day
and
start
a
self
check
in.
See
how
it
makes
you
feel,
then
do
it
again.
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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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