

# 5 Things

Newsletter



Corley Caregiver Consulting, LLC

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

September is almost gone. It's Fall Ya'll! I hope you're enjoying it in spite of it being the step before winter. But we don't speak of those things here! Only good things!

Hot drinks, lightweight sweaters, and long sleeves are all trickling into my daily routines. Being the nerd that I am, I'm happy because my fall/winter wardrobe is my favorite. It's the little things that make me happy.

As with every newsletter, I'm back in your inbox to share 5 things that have helped, inspired or lightened the emotional load of my caregiving journey over the past month. I do this every month in the hope 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!

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### **1. A Slow Start to Mornings**

For 22 years, I worked a full time job while helping care for my sister who has developmental disabilities. She lives with my parents so I would go there 3 days a week after work for a few hours.

As a rule, I started every day at 5:00am, and often ran errands before work (like grocery shopping!). To this day, in retrospect, I don't know how I did it as long

as I did. I knew in my heart I could not keep up that pace long term. I'd have a heart attack. Sadly, at that time, I couldn't see an answer to the problem. I didn't know what I could give up. It was all important. How could I possibly cut something out!?

It was 2020 and COVID hit. I was furloughed from my job, gifting me with the precious gift of white space. I was given the gift of time to hear myself think and listen for God whispers. That's ultimately what lead me to start my own business as a Direct Care Worker and Caregiver Coach. It was a total shift of life, career and priorities....all because of white space.

If I learned anything about that entire 22 years of working full time while caregiving, I learned I needed to slow down. I needed to ease into each day rather than hit the ground running.

I equate it with stepping on a treadmill. You don't jump onto a treadmill with it going top speed at a runner's pace. What do you do? You step on it and then slowly increase the speed until you're moving at the pace you want.

That's how I look at each day now. Is it full of to-do's? Yes. I'm just as busy as I used to be, just in different ways. Do I hit the ground running like I used to? No. If I have to be somewhere at 9:00, I purposely give myself a wake up time 2 hours before simply because I choose not to be rushed and start my day frantically. I want it to be a nice steady pace that I can carve out for me to slowly step into my day.

I'm not going to sit here and tell you I do this 100% of the time, because I don't. I do, however, make a conscious effort to create a slower morning pace. I even go so far as to save my weekend mornings for coffee in my pjs sitting on the front porch. I like to keep my week full and my weekends light and a slower pace helps with that goal.

Keep in mind this has to be a priority for you because life will gladly fill all the space and all your time. This becomes a matter of boundaries and valuing your own well-being. You have to matter to you. I know that sounds strange, but it's true and caregivers know it. If anyone's going to be pushed to the back seat of life, it's going to be us. We do it to ourselves. Maybe it's time to put our name on our own list of priorities for a change.

Small steps are still progress and progress can look like a slow start to the morning.

## 2. Marking a Change in Season

Fall has officially arrived in the US! In Ohio, that means chillier mornings, falling leaves and the start of shorter days. I'm not a fan of losing daylight, but I really enjoy the change from summer to fall.

By this time of year, I start feeling burned out. I've had yard work to do all summer and while I love it, I'm ready to set it aside. My chores list for fall is out and I'm starting to check things off in preparation for winter and rest.

When we moved to the country almost 3 years ago, I gained a new found appreciation for the change in seasons. In that appreciation, I started welcoming each new season with new rituals in my day or week. With fall, I've started embracing warm tea again (I can't drink hot tea in the summer for some reason). I've started wearing my favorite purple sweater on chilly mornings and I'm slowly welcoming my fall wardrobe, which is my favorite. I've also changed the "o" on my porch welcome sign to a fall leaf.

It might sound silly, but there's a lot of value in doing seasonal things like this. It's about helping to keep us present and living in the now a bit. As caregivers, we're rarely present for long. We are forward thinkers prepping, planning, worrying, stressing. While being a forward thinker has its place and definite value, it also blinds us to what's happening right now. At least that's been true for me. Time goes by so fast when you have your head down pushing through each day. Small things can help us mark time and feel more present.

You don't have to be happy about Fall because we know what comes after, but if it's going to happen anyway, we might as well embrace what's good about it. The smell of burning leaves, smoke from a fire pit, the colors of changing leaves, that favorite sweater or hot beverage paired with a chilly day. Tapping into our senses is what keeps us present and able to enjoy the small moments of where we are even when the larger moments might be heavy, stressful or too much sometimes.

## 3. A New Twist on a Favorite Summertime Beverage

Do you read product labels? Cereal boxes? Beverage labels? I read the cereal boxes from time to time, but most of the time, I don't pay any attention to things beyond the product logo. I may be late to the game on this one, but I recently bought some Arizona Tea at the grocery store. I noticed the label said to try it hot. What? Really? Hmm. Interesting. I've only ever thought of it as a cold beverage for a hot day.

May I humbly suggest you change your way of thinking on this one!! Arizona Tea hot is my new favorite fall beverage. It's a great addition to my chilly day routine. Quick and easy. Pour into your favorite mug and microwave! It's a lovely surprise that's been hidden in plain sight all this time! It's quickly become a quick and easy gift of self care to myself even on the busiest of days.



Arizona Tea - Try it hot!!!

#### **4. Be a Tourist in Your Own Area**

I touched on this topic in a previous newsletter, but for those of you who've joined since, it bears repeating because it's really become a regular practice for me.

When we moved from the city to the country almost 3 years ago, it was a no brainer. We had to familiarize ourselves with our new area. Find the hidden gems and seek out the cool spots. With time, we got into routines and often didn't divert beyond our usual places. It became a bit of "looking without really seeing" what was around us.

Given my husband's physical limitations, vacations in the traditional sense simply aren't practical. That's not to say we can't explore new things in ways that are more conducive to his abilities.

We recently picked a city about 25 minutes from us to just start exploring! We know the business sector of the area, but never really dug in and searched for the cooler niches of the area. We've been pleasantly surprised I must say.

It's been a great way for us to try new things without the stress of a typical vacation. If you have someone with mobility or health issues, you know a vacation is not always a vacation. It's a lot of work as the caregiver. Packing extra items, preparing for the "what ifs", considering how to work around diet restrictions, all those important nuances that people don't consider unless they are a caregiver.

I understand why people stay home. Vacations can be stressful and honestly so much work they might not even feel worth doing at all. For the caregiver, they often aren't a relaxing and renewing experience either. It's all the normal work, but done in an unfamiliar area with unpredictable variables. That doesn't sound relaxing at all, does it?

Frankly, you might not even consider it because it's simply not feasible. In situations like those, I encourage you to consider whether exploring your area might be a good option for you.

We all need a change of scenery and new air in our lungs sometimes. That can look like a lot of different things. Staying close to home counts.

I heard an idea recently that suggested exploring your area in a 3 mile radius from your house. Check out small businesses, nooks and crannies you might never have considered before. It's a fun way to not only get to know your area, but also to insert a break in your routine of caregiving. Inject some fun and adventure, even if you stay close to home.

## 5. A Quote to Ponder

I love quotes. I collect them, actually. I find them to be a great way to infuse motivation, inspiration or even laughter into my day, often when I need it most.

I can't remember where I found this one, but it immediately spoke to me of an area I struggle with as a caregiver. I'm sure I'm not alone in this one either.

**"I am doing the best I  
can. I can give myself  
a moment now to  
gather my thoughts. I  
can stop and be still"  
~Christina Furnival**

I have no idea if the author was a caregiver or just a busy human being, but it certainly rang true to me for caregivers of all journeys and stories.

***"I am doing the best I can"***

How many of us can say we tell ourselves that often? I certainly don't. I always

think I can (and should) be doing better, doing more. Imagine how good it would feel if we told ourselves (and actually believed) we were doing our best. It's the truth. At a cellular level, none of us are intentionally doing less than our best for our careers, so why do we tell ourselves we aren't?

***"I can give myself a moment now to gather my thoughts."***

Raise your hand if you allow yourself time to gather your thoughts! Yeah, me neither. Well, that's not entirely true. I'm a work in progress on this one. It's only been in recent years that I've realized when I feel stressed what I need most is to stop! I need a moment to pause (or many of them).

***"I can stop and be still".***

Silence and stillness are when ideas, answers, inspiration, and peace find you. For me, it's when I hear God's voice and direction. It's when I'm the most creative. This can be really difficult to do and again, I'm still struggling with it. I'm quick to allow "life" to fill my time with the intention of carving time for myself later. Often "later" only comes when I'm about to fall apart from stress and overwhelm.

I'd encourage you to sit with this quote. I plan to use it like a daily mantra to (hopefully!) help me break habits that are no longer serving me. I hope you'll consider trying it too and if you do, I'd love to hear how it goes for you. What inspiration did you glean from the experience? How did you feel before, during and after you tried it?

These 3 simple sentences can pave the way to the ultimate gift of self care we can offer ourselves. Remember, you matter in this caregiving journey equation too.

## **Ideas and Takeaways for the Month Ahead**

- Google  
your  
area  
and  
find  
1  
place  
you've  
never  
been  
and  
visit!
- Pick

one  
way  
to  
enjoy  
the  
arrival  
of  
Autumn.

- Carve  
out  
5  
minutes  
to  
sit  
and  
be  
still.  
Give  
yourself  
a  
moment  
to  
exhale!



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 and encourage them to subscribe!

If I can support you in your own caregiving journey, please message me. I'd

love to hear your story and offer you a safe space.

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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