

21 Mistakes Caregivers Make Course



Lesson 7 Article: How to be a Happy Caregiver & Celebrate Daily

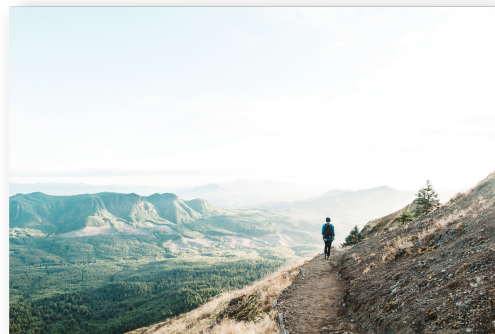
Caregiving and happiness can seem mutually exclusive when struggles and worry are all-consuming. We know caregiving is complex, with seemingly impossible challenges. Our negative thoughts and beliefs add to the suffering and pain, creating stress, worry, guilt, and arguments with family and friends. What if there is an alternative?

What if we can find happiness while we face struggles? Otherwise, we put our happiness on hold, wait for life to be less stressful, and miss out on some of our best opportunities to experience joy. While some of us may be more predisposed to happiness, with intention and strategy, we can each be happy even during some of the most challenging circumstances.

1. Remember your Why

When we get caught up in the complexities of caregiving, we often lose sight of our Why. We feel disconnected from why we care, why we feel so deeply and why we are driven to do the hard things. When we reconnect with our Why, we move out from under the overwhelm and we recognize the tremendous opportunity to celebrate our loved one and our time together. Our Why is our source of strength.

There are many methods to reacquaint ourselves with our purpose our *raison d'être*. We may participate in a religious or spiritual practice that helps us feel whole and a part of something bigger than us. We may engage with folks who share similar values, or we might prefer the solitude of nature, journaling, or meditation. If caregiving created distance between you and your inner truth, remember your Why and follow the path back to yourself



2. Look for new ways to give and receive love

Caregiving demands are intense. When we prioritize love, we discover new ways to give and receive profound love. A spontaneous embrace can be just the gesture to shift the mood from fear and frustration to love and laughter.

Taking time to pause and chat with our loved one rather than race off to attend to the next task can create the moments we will cherish when we no longer have that opportunity. Being present when we prepare a meal or sort medications helps us recognize the love that flows through each act of care. Love is the greatest gift we will give or receive. Give love lavishly! Receive love abundantly!

3. Celebrate daily

A celebration doesn't require a plan or a party. We can celebrate the simple happy happenings and make memories that we will cherish for years. We can create happy moments to share with friends, family, and new caregiving journey travel companions. What brings you both joy and how can you share more of those experiences? A change of scenery can inspire a change in mood. Consider spending time outside. If food brings joy, how can meals become a celebration? An indoor or outdoor picnic might be fun. Minimize regret and maximize memories by being present and finding joy every day. Celebrate your loved one! Celebrate your relationship! Laugh and share the joy! Collect souvenirs. Take photos and videos.

4. Set an intention to be happy

Happiness can feel elusive when the stress of caring for our loved one consumes our thoughts. We hear that happiness is a choice and feel shame when we struggle to find joy in our caregiving experience. Give yourself the space and grace to feel the uncomfortable feelings. Breathe through them.

When you are ready, decide to be happy. Finding happiness and joy requires an intentional focus on the present moment. Imagine you are on a scavenger hunt and the present is the prize, but the present is hidden beneath layers of past resentments and future worries.

When you set an intention to be happy, your path will wind toward the present moments that bring joy. An intention written in your journal or on a post-it placed on the bathroom mirror can shift your course toward happiness. A mantra repeated throughout the day can help you tune into the present and appreciate the beauty and brilliance in the ordinary moments. There are a few things we have control over in caregiving and life. Fortunately, our happiness is one of them. So, decide to be happy, and believe you can be happy. Caregiving is challenging, yet it does not need to make you miserable.

