

## Continuing Design Review Newsletter

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### **DON'T NEGLECT YOUR FUNNY BONE**

I made one of my more important caregiving discoveries while caring for my grandmother. She was literally paralyzed from acute Parkinson's disease and could no longer read, so I read to her. It didn't take long for us to figure out that while the classics were certainly worth reading, we both had a lot more fun when I read humorous books. We giggled our way through a couple of Erma Bombeck's best. Sometimes we were both laughing so hard, I had to quit reading.

It turns out that the old saying about laughter as good medicine is true on a physical as well as emotional level, so this month, I'm making laughter my theme. I invite you to find ways to bring laughter and lightness of spirit into your caregiving.

There are two thorough discussions about the benefits on laughter and fun in my book, *Search for Light: Ten Crucial Lessons for Caregivers* and its

supplement, the Blueprint for Caregiving series. Both are available at [www.blueprintforcaregiving.com](http://www.blueprintforcaregiving.com).

Basically there are three levels of benefits from laughter—relaxation and immune system boost; bonding and intimacy, and recuperation from life's setbacks.

First, laughter sets off a series of physical reactions that can actually improve our health. The reason is that our brain produces endorphins, which are mood regulators, or feel-good chemicals. These chemicals also improve our health by suppressing stress hormones, such as cortisol and epinephrine that attack our immune system.

Then there's the bonding experience that occurs when we laugh with someone else, as I did with Granny. Laughing with our patients brings a level of intimacy to our relationship that might otherwise be lacking under the pressure of the medical journey. Shared laughter reminds both caregiver and patient that "we're in this together."

Finally, there's the recuperation effect. When you get hit with a bad-news surprise, finding a way to laugh about it can get you back on even ground.

An article I found at [www.helpguide.org](http://www.helpguide.org) noted that laughter also helps the body relax and benefits the heart because it improves blood flow.

Here are some suggestions to make laughter a part of the daily routine you share with your loved one:

- Watch a funny movie or TV show;
- Read the funny pages;
- Invite visits from people you know who have an active sense of humor;
- Share a good joke or a funny story;
- Get a humorous book from your library or local book store;
- Play games together and invite friend to participate;
- Make time to play with your pet;
- Make time to play with children, and
- Make time for fun activities such as goofy golf, karaoke, or bowling.

I leave you with this quote from psychologist Paul E. McGhee: "Your sense of humor is one of the most powerful tools you have to make certain that your daily mood and emotional state support good health."

I hope you enjoy some of the humor in this edition of the newsletter.  
Blessings, Joanne

### **Caregiver Inspiration for the Month**

Seen on a bumper sticker:

I'm out of bed, I'm dressed-- what more do you want?

## END OF SUMMER SALE EXTENDED

Thanks to all who took the time to let me know that the sale I announced and my website were not in sync. We got the kinks worked out, and we're extending the sale until October 1.

For \$25 you will receive a copy of *Search for Light: Ten Crucial Lessons for Caregivers* and the print-out CD of your choice (Cancer, Dementia, Elder or general) of *Blueprint for Caregiving*. That's a \$45 package that would also normally include tax and shipping. You pay just \$25!

Go to [www.blueprintforcaregiving.com](http://www.blueprintforcaregiving.com) and use the End of Summer Sale button to order.

## Recommendation for Caregivers

Since humor is our theme, please check out the video at the link below:

<http://www.caregiverstress.com/2010/07/a-reminder-that-laughter-is-the-best-medicine/>

The website is [www.caregiverstress.com](http://www.caregiverstress.com). It's the site of Home Instead, whose founders wrote the book on senior care that I recommended in July. It's worth a look, too.

## UPCOMING WORKSHOPS

Please join me at one of these free workshops that are coming up in September and October.

**Thursday, Sept. 30, 7 p.m.** at Monument Presbyterian Church, 2020 ½ S. Broadway, Grand Junction, CO. This is hosted by Monument Presbyterian for all of the Stephen Ministers at area churches, but is open to the public as well. It's free.

**Saturday, Oct. 9, 9 a.m.** Conference Center, Hoag Memorial Hospital's Cancer Center, 1 Hospital Road, Newport Beach, CA. This is open to cancer center patients and their caregivers.

**Saturday, Oct. 16, 10 a.m.** St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, 600 St. Andrew's Road, Newport Beach, CA. This is sponsored by the Pastoral Care and Stephen Ministry and is open to the community. It's free.

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