

AUGUST 23, 2023

Positive Caregiving

Harnessing the Power of Positive Emotions in the Caregiving Journey

By Sarah Teten Kanter, Ph.D.

What we will be talking about today:

1. What is Positive Caregiving?
2. How to harness the power of positive emotions in your care journeys
3. Sample activities and personal practices that can be used in all care scenarios
4. How to incorporate micro-moments of self-care into daily life
5. Q&A opportunity

Quick overview of terms and definitions

- Care partners: caregivers *and* care receivers
- Care partnerships include *all* types of care scenarios:
 - Sudden or new
 - Part-time
 - Full-time
 - Remote
 - Partnerships when one partner is living in a care community
- Micro-moments: brief exercises that can be practiced and completed in 5 seconds to 5 minutes



What is Positive Caregiving?

Positive Caregiving

1. A mindset
2. A mission
3. A movement

What makes a care partnership positive?

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VS.

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1. Focusing on the positive aspects of aging and caring for one another
2. Keeping positive emotions at the center of the journey
3. Savoring the day together
4. Growing in relationships and as individuals

1. Focusing on the negative aspects of aging and caring for one another
2. Staying in ruts of stress, sadness, fear, guilt, and other negative emotions associated with burden and burnout
3. Simply getting through the day
4. Dwelling on losses

Positive Caregiving

1. A mindset
2. A mission
3. A movement
4. A method

Foundational tools to build a Positive Caregiving Method

Built on a foundation of multiple disciplines, philosophies, and strategies that have well-established track records of helping people deal with challenges intrinsic to being human.

None of these things are new. Some have been around for a millennia, some are more recent areas of discovery and research.



Positive Psychology



Reminiscence Therapy

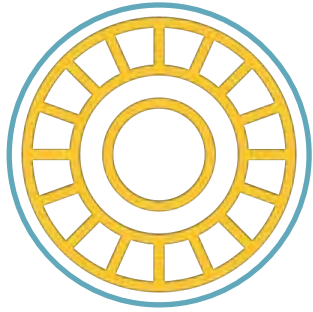


Lifestyle Medicine

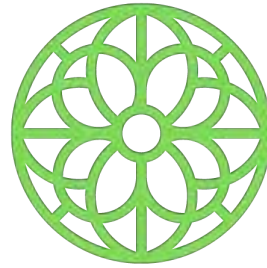


Meditation/Mindfulness

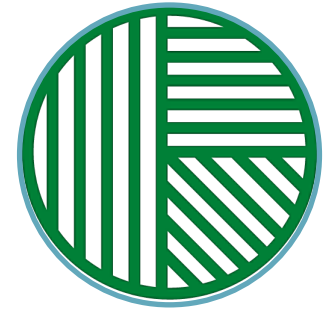
Five Positive Emotions/Skills Central to Positive Caregiving



1. Gratitude



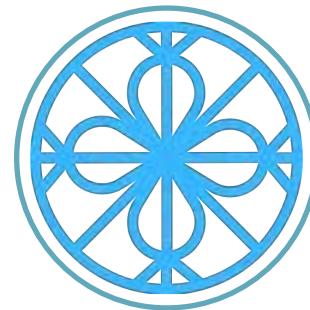
2. Empathy



3. Forgiveness



4. Love



5. Awe

Why these five?

1. They can help *balance* common negative emotions reported in care journeys (stress, anxiety, fear, guilt, frustration, sadness etc.)
2. They have been shown to improve physical and mental health
3. All can help reduce stress
4. They create meaning in daily life
5. As a care receiver in a care partnership - isn't this what we would want?





Building a Method: The Four Pillars of Positive Caregiving



Pillar 1: Perspective

Keeping caregiving and life in perspective helps us prioritize, maintain balance, and find meaning in our care partner roles.

Pillar 2: Savoring

The practice of fully enjoying and appreciating positive experiences. It is particularly important amidst challenging times, it help to inspire and maintain hope, and it helps to build our personal resilience.



Pillar 3: Reminiscence

Helps us to maintain a connection to our past, offers space to explore meaning, promotes emotional well-being, and allows for the sharing of wisdom.



Pillar 4: Growth

Caring for one another is an opportunity to practice positive emotions as skills, strengthening both our bonds with our loved ones, as well as our own personal resilience.

Putting it all together.

Putting a Positive Caregiving Method into Practice:



Reflections

Keeping perspective with the help of those who have lived before us.



Questions and Conversation Starters

Encouraging reminiscence, listening, and sharing through questions that align to the shared care partner activities.



Shared Care Partner Activities

Activity ideas based in gratitude, empathy, forgiveness, love and awe for care partners to savor the day.



Personal Practices

Support personal growth and wellness during the caregiving journey with easy micro-moments and practices.

IN PRACTICE

What are some examples?

Everyday Activity

Walking

Everyday Activity: Walking



Gratitude Walk

Reflection: An early morning walk is a blessing for the whole day. - Henry David Thoreau (1817 – 1862)

Activity: As you walk with your care partner, identify five things for which you are grateful for. Considering writing them down or snapping a photo of five things for future reminiscence.

Let's Talk: Where are your favorite places to walk?

If you could go for a walk anywhere in the world right now, where would it be?

If you could go for a walk with anyone in the world, past or present, who would it be?

Personal Practice: Focus every step of the way. Among its many benefits, walking also provides an opportunity for meditation. As you walk, focus on the steps. Feel the ground beneath your feet. Try thinking: "Thank you" as you step heel (thank) to toe (you) as a form of meditation.

Everyday Activity: Walking



Empathy: Eye to Eye

Reflection: The soul, fortunately, has an interpreter - often an unconscious, but still faithful interpreter - in the eye. - Charlotte Bronte (1816 - 1855)

Activity: Greet each person you see with a smile, a hello, and/or a wave. Take time to recognize their humanity, their presence, their lives. Feel the connection you make with them and the empathy you feel. You may walk to your favorite park bench, bus stop, or picnic table to greet others as they walk by.

Let's Talk: Do you enjoy talking with strangers?
Is it easy for you to meet and connect with new people?
Where do you find yourself people-watching the most?

Personal Practice: Quiet connection. Even if you are not seeing your care partner today, make it a point as you walk through your daily life to meet people's (especially strangers!) gazes to recharge your energy and give you a chance to experience empathy.

Everyday Activity: Walking



Forgiveness: Labyrinth Walk

Reflection: He who cannot forgive breaks the bridge over which he himself must pass. – George Herbert (1593 - 1633)

Activity: Walk a labyrinth or a circular path as an exercise of forgiveness. Use each step toward the center or around the path as an opportunity to reflect and bring you closer and closer to forgiveness of yourself or others. You can find labyrinths across the U.S. by searching "Labyrinth locator" online.

Let's Talk: Have you become more forgiving as you have aged? Who is the most forgiving person you have ever known? Do you have an early memory of forgiveness in your life?

Personal Practice: Focus on the journey. Walks around a labyrinth, a round path or around the block have a definitive start and stopping point. Try to imagine your path from above - noticing the journey, the incremental movement forward with each step, acknowledge the power of your being able to move through space and time.

Everyday Activity: Walking



Love: Heart Walk

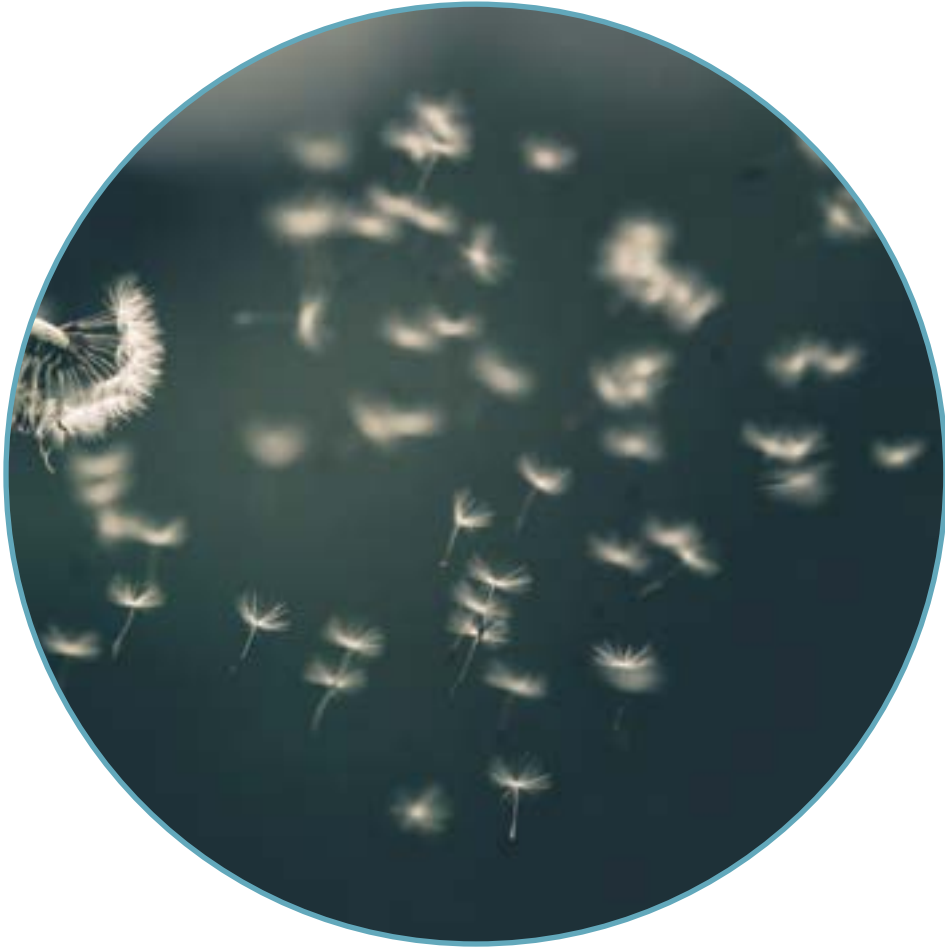
Reflection: A loving heart is the truest wisdom. - Charles Dickens (1812 - 1870)

Activity: The heart shape has become a universal symbol of love. On your walk, be on the look-out for heart shaped items. Leaves, rocks, tree bark, signage - you might be surprised how many hearts you will find. Let them serve as visual reminders of love. .

Let's Talk: Were you surprised at how many hearts you found? What other things besides hearts remind you of love? What is the most loving thing that has been done for you this week?

Personal Practice: Heart love. From watching salt intake to increasing veggie consumption, there are many ways to take care of our own hearts at each meal. Some of the best foods for heart health include nuts, leafy greens, berries, and beans. Think about how you can add one to two heart healthy foods to your meals this week.

Everyday Activity: Walking



Awe: Wind Watching

Reflection: My soul is awakened, my spirit is soaring, and carried aloft on the wings of the breeze. - Anne Bronte (1820-1949)

Activity: While you walk, watch the wind and how it influences nature and humanity. Talk about all the ways you can sense the wind - on skin, in hair, hear it through the trees, see it moving pants or water - pushing the clouds by. What are the most moving ways you sense the wind? Are there any ways of seeing or feeling the wind that you have never thought of before?

Let's Talk: When has the wind charmed you, and when has it threatened?

Has pleasure or fear caused by the wind brought you closer to others who shared the experience?

Did you grow up in a place where wind was common?

Personal Practice: Breathing helps us to be one with the wind: as we inhale, wind enters us; as we exhale, our breath leaves to rejoin the wind. Focus on your own breathing, Inhaling and exhaling with the wind.

Everyday Activity

Eating

Everyday Activity: Eating

Gratitude: A Toast!



Reflection: Let us be grateful to people who make us happy; they are the charming gardeners who make our souls blossom. - Marcel Proust (1871-1922)

Activity: Toasting, or offering a spoken gesture of gratitude, appreciation, or good will is an ancient and international tradition. Each of you write a toast to be given at dinner with a glass of champagne, sparkling juice, soda, or water. Whether it's a modest sentence or two, or a longer expression of gratitude, this shared offering, and the clinking of glasses will make the meal extra special.

Let's Talk: Do you have a favorite toast?

- Have you ever had to give a toast to a large group or at an important event?
- Was toasting part of your family meals or holidays growing up?

Personal Practice: Raise a toast to yourself today or any day. Raise your cup, mug, or glass at any time of the day. Make up your own toast or quietly recite to yourself: Here's to me and this one life I am living. May my heart always lead the way.

Everyday Activity: Eating



Empathy: Exploring our World Through Food

Reflection: There are no strangers here, only friends you have not met.
— attributed to William Butler Yeats (1865 – 1939)

Activity: Be an armchair traveler in the kitchen today. Pick a country whose cuisine is new to you and your care partner and try some of its traditional recipes. Make the meal a fuller experience by researching the country and its culture. Watch a video about the country beforehand and play national music while you eat.

Let's Talk: What foods are core to your own cultures?

- What are some of the common dishes that represent your heritage that you love the most?
- Is there a kind of food that you have always wanted to try?
- Who are some of the people in your lives who have introduced different cuisines to you?

Personal Practice: Hara hachi bu.

Based on Confucian wisdom, mindful eating follows the rule of hara hachi bu, which means, to stop eating when 80 percent full. Try thinking 'hara hachi bu' before your meals today and see how this mindfulness trick can keep your mind focused on your food, your belly satisfied, and your body happy.

Everyday Activity: Eating



Forgiveness: Candlelight Dinner

Reflection: Holding onto anger is like grasping a hot coal with the intent of throwing it at someone else, you are the one who gets burned. — Buddha (563 – 483 BC)

Activity: Use a candlelight dinner as the path to forgiveness. Turn off the TV and play soft music in the background or eat in silence with your care partner by the light of candles. Make a favorite meal. Savor the time as you eat. Let the dinner last...and with each bite, imagine releasing what you wish to forgive. You can talk about your intention over the meal with your care partner, or simply practice this act of forgiveness on your own. At the end of the meal, blow out the candles as a forgiveness meditation. When each of you blow out of the flame(s), imagine letting any wrongs you have felt lately go with the disappearance of the flame.

Let's Talk: Do you enjoy candlelight?

- Did your family light candles for special occasions growing up?
- What else besides candlelight can make a meal extra special?

Personal Practice: Centering. A simple visual cue, like the flame of a candle, can help you focus and center yourself. Light a candle, take a comfortable seat in direct sight of the candle, and rest your eyes on the flame. Try to stay in the present as you focus on the flickering light and take deep calming breaths for a few minutes before blowing out the flame.

Everyday Activity: Eating



Love: Bake a Family Favorite

Reflection: The secret ingredient to baking is love. — Anonymous

Activity: Some say that baking is more of a science than an art, but like art, baking a family favorite can bring back memories and fill your home and your hearts with love. Today decide on one of your favorite family recipes for the two of you to bake together. Don't rush or be distracted: Take time to enjoy the process, and the precision that makes its way into the final product. Savor the love you put into it as you sample the final product.

Let's Talk: What are some of your family's favorite baked goods?

- Is there a baked good that is special for you and your care partner?
- Is there a pastry or a baked item that reminds you especially of your childhood?

Personal Practice: Baking with presence. Any kind of cooking can be a meditation, but baking gives us an opportunity to be 100 percent present with the recipes, which need to be more exact than in other forms of cooking. Embracing and focusing on being precise as you measure out ingredients transforms baking into a more mindful activity. Today, give yourself the gift of presence: presence with your care partner, and presence in the act of baking.

Everyday Activity: Eating



Awe: Food Links

Reflection: There is hardly anything unconnected with any other thing.
— Marcus Aurelius(121 – 180)

Activity: Choose a meal to discuss the food sources and processes that made your meal happen. For instance, if you're enjoying a slice of pizza, consider the long cycle necessary for the creation of pizza. Wheat is grown, harvested, and ground into flour. Yeast is cultivated, grown, and dried, then processed for distribution. The sauce's tomatoes are grown in the sun, and the mozzarella is created from cow's or buffalo's milk. And then, what about those favorite toppings on the pizza? Think about how sunlight and rain are essential to grow vegetables. We often don't take the time to think about how our meals comes to be, yet this can provide for a fascinating conversation that can leave us in awe of the bounty of this earth.

Let's Talk: What are your favorite foods that are grown in the ground?
• What are your favorite foods that grow on trees?
• Did you have a garden growing up? What did your family grow?

Personal Practice: Luscious local foods. Foods will often start to lose some of their nutritional values within 24 hours of being harvested. Local foods, or foods grown in your own proximity, are more nutritious simply because the time that it takes from picking or harvesting to your own table is shorter. This week, make an effort to source a locally grown item or ingredient in a meal or for a snack.

Right fit

Different Care Scenarios

Different Care Scenarios

New or Sudden Care Partners

Gratitude: Neighbor Appreciation

Reflection: A good neighbor is a priceless treasure - Chinese Proverb

Activity: Get to know some of your care partner's neighbors with an expression of gratitude. With your care partner, write a note of appreciation, drop off a small thank-you gift such as a bouquet of flowers or cookies, or offer to help with a chore such as sweeping their walk or shoveling snow. If there's a neighbor your care partner doesn't know, introduce yourselves.

Let's Talk: • How well do you know your neighbors?

- What can you tell me about your current neighbors?
- What do you remember about a neighbor you had growing up?
- Have you had a favorite neighbor in your life? Who were they and where are they now?

Personal Practice: Contact lists - Neighbors can be a great support system for you as a caregiver. Create a simple contact list with names, phone numbers, and emails of your care partner's neighbors. Keep this list handy or snap a picture of it to store in your phone.



Different Care Scenarios



Part-Time Care Partners

Love: Home Adaptations

Reflection: Life belongs to the living, and they who live must be prepared for the changes. — Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe (1749 – 1832)

Activity: There are many easy-to-do adaptations to help prevent falls, improve mobility, and just make life easier.

Let's Talk: Does anything in your living environment make you feel unsafe?

- Is there anything that would help you feel safer in your home?
- What physical changes do you notice the most as you have aged?
- How have you adapted to age-related changes?

Personal Practice: Plan for emergencies.

Do you have an emergency escape plan if there were a fire in your own home? A fire extinguisher on each floor of the house? Don't waste time castigating yourself if you don't. Simply forgive and prepare a plan.

Different Care Scenarios



Remote Care Partners: Empathy: Try Twelve

Reflection: The best way to predict your future is to create it. —
Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865)

Activity: Together with your care partner make a list of 12 books, podcasts, or movies that you and your care partner would like to read, listen to or watch this year. Then, commit to reading a book, listening to a podcast, or viewing a movie once a month. If you need help finding book or movie suggestions, look up lists online according to your favorite genre or speak to your local librarian. Schedule time to chat with each other and have an informal review session.

Let's Talk: • Do you prefer books, podcasts, or movies?
How many books do you read per year?
How often do you watch movies or listen to podcasts?

Personal Practice: Take five. Lay down and close your eyes for five minutes. Let thoughts come and go. Take this time to clear your mind, relax, and reboot.

Different Care Scenarios



Full-Time Care Partners

Forgiveness: Recent Tensions

Reflection: May the bond of our true affection be knit ever more closely for all time. — Leoba (710 – 782)

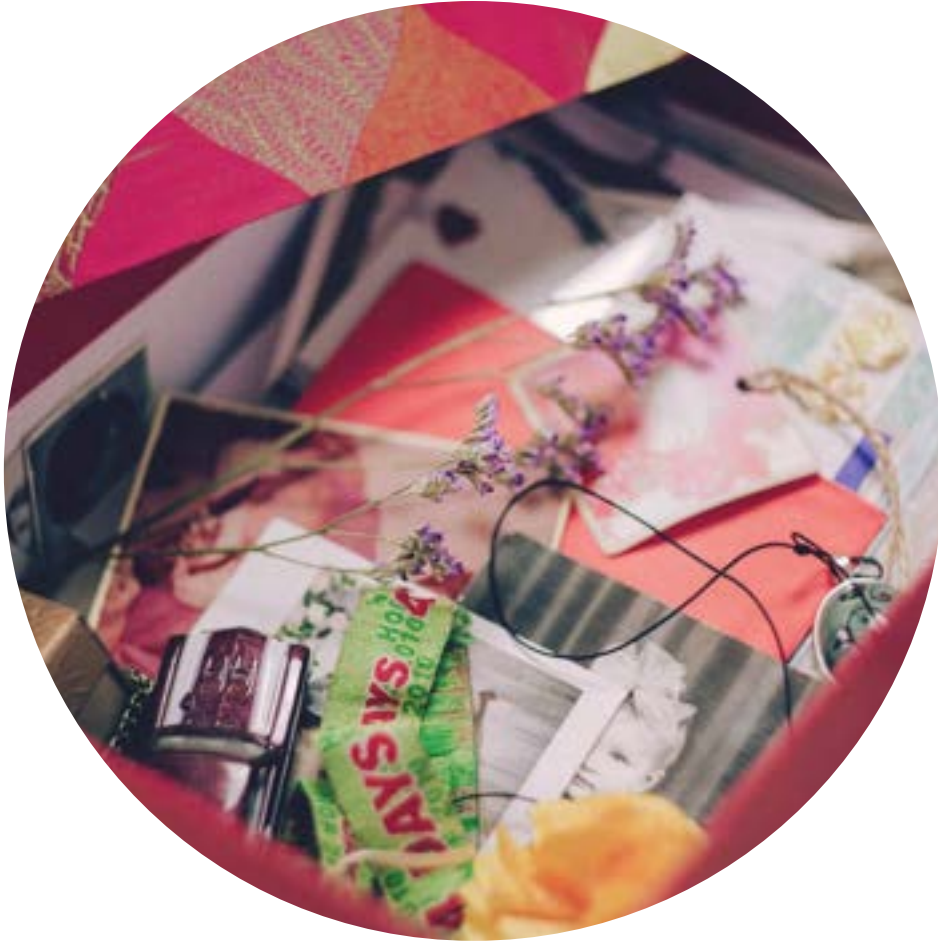
Activity: Take a few moments to discuss with your care partner if there have been any recent tensions in your caregiving relationship. If none, celebrate! If there are, use some time today to discuss them, listening to each other's perspective. Sometimes talking it out is the best way to get through the tension and promote forgiveness.

Let's Talk: What are some of your pet peeves?

- If you could change one thing in your daily routine to help ease tension, what would it be?
- What are some of the things that just click or work well in this caregiving relationship?
- What are some things that always seem to help calm you down or relax when you feel tension?

Personal Practice: Tension release. For an instant tension release, clench your fists tightly for thirty seconds and then let go, opening your hands and stretching your fingers on an exhale. Feel the fear and stress leave through your fingertips. This simple technique has been shown to help relieve anxiety, and as a bonus may also help to boost memory and recall.

Different Care Scenarios



Care Partners to Someone Living in Long Term Care Communities

Love: Memory Boxes

Reflection: But a golden web of love is around us and beneath us, binds us to our home above. — Julia Ward Howe (1819 – 1910)

Activity: Memory boxes are simply a place to store a variety of mementos, photos, memorabilia, and items that remind us of special people, places, events, or time periods. Today with your care partner, look through your memory boxes that you have made, if you have them, and then create new memory boxes that represent your current life.

Let's Talk: Do you have a memory box?

- How and where do you store your mementos?
- What are some of your favorite mementos?

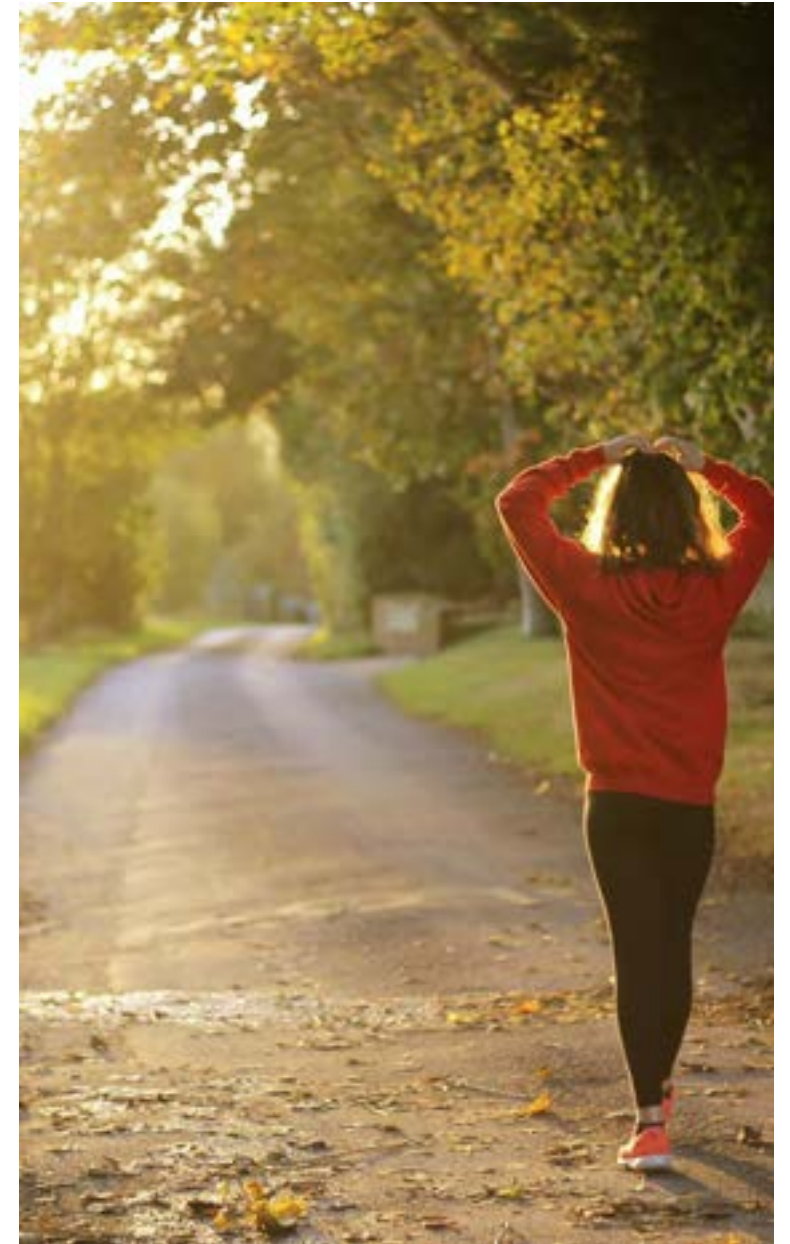
Personal Practice: Is there a loved one whom you are missing? Make a memory box to honor just them. Put some of the items that remind you the most of them in the box —anything that brings them back to you. Let the act of gathering these items call their love back to you.

Caring for ourselves is an act of love.

Micro-Moments of Self-Care

Micro-Moments

Personal practices that take just 5 seconds to 5 minutes to help you relax, refocus, and/or recharge.



Some Favorite Micro-Moments



Three good things

Name three good things that you are grateful for right now. This small task, also known as the Three Good Things (TGT) exercises was created by the founder of the Positive Psychology movement, Martin Seligman. It has been shown to increase happiness and reduce stress. Try it anytime you need a little pick-me-up.

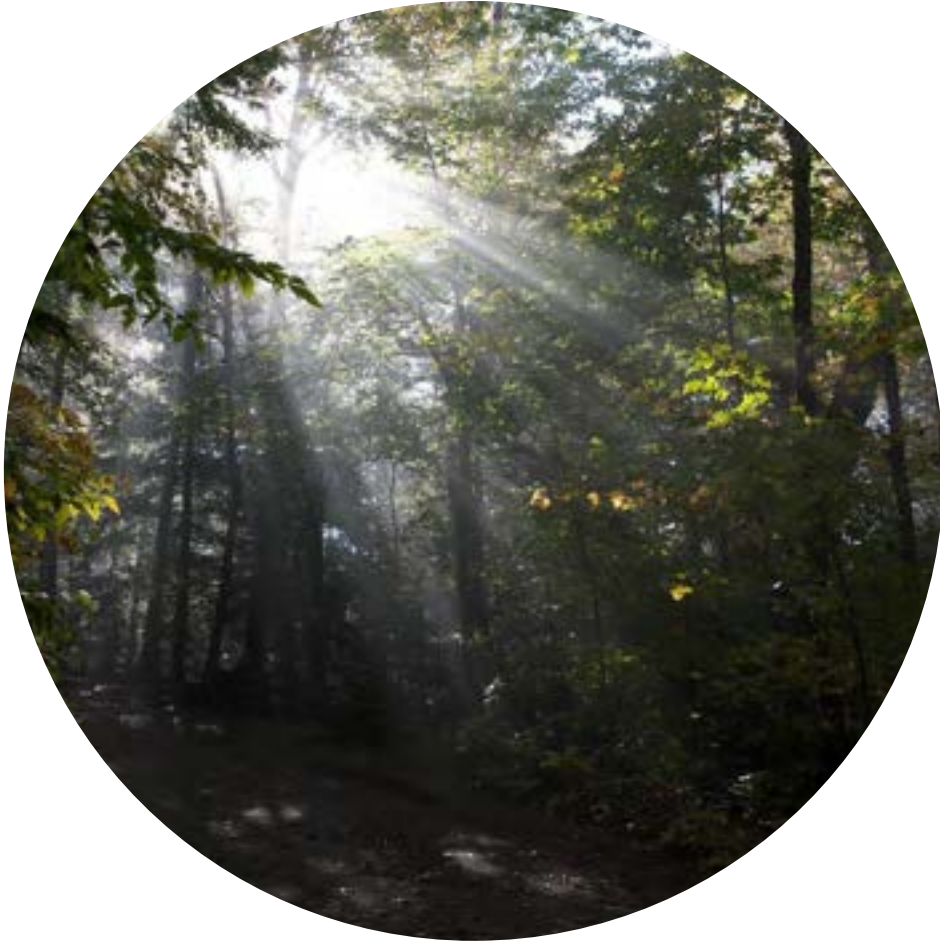
Some Favorite Micro-Moments



Look and listen for birds.

Seeing and hearing birds in daily life has been shown to help decrease stress and anxiety. Bring yourself to the here and now by patiently looking for a bird in the sky, on the ground, in a tree. If you are outside, listen for their songs.

Some Favorite Micro-Moments



Spot komorebi

In Japanese, the word komorebi (koh-moh-reh-bee) is the term used to describe the sunlight as it filters through the trees. See if you can catch a moment of komorebi outside and let the light wash over you.

Some Favorite Micro-Moments



Turn up the tunes

Music can work miracles on the brain. Reducing stress, decreasing pain, and lessening depressive symptoms are just some of the potential benefits. Music can also improve cognitive and motor skills, and even team up with the brain to produce new neurons - the building blocks of memory making and retrieval.

Some Favorite Micro-Moments



Warm blanket

Throw a clean, dry blanket in the dryer and let it run for a few minutes. Use the warmed blanket to give yourself a comforting gift or kindness on the couch as you watch a show, in a chair while you read or as you lie down to bed.

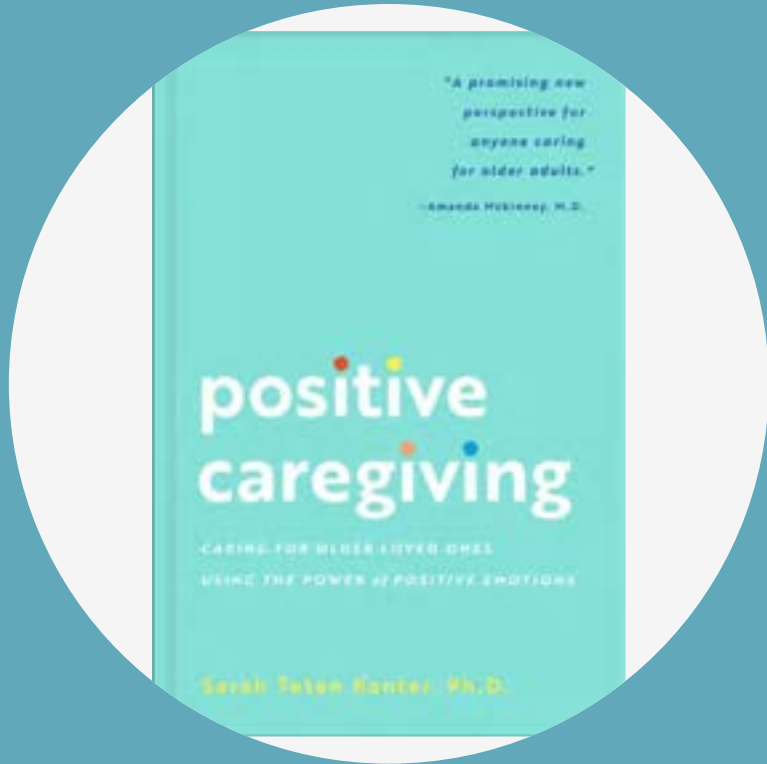
Some Favorite Micro-Moments



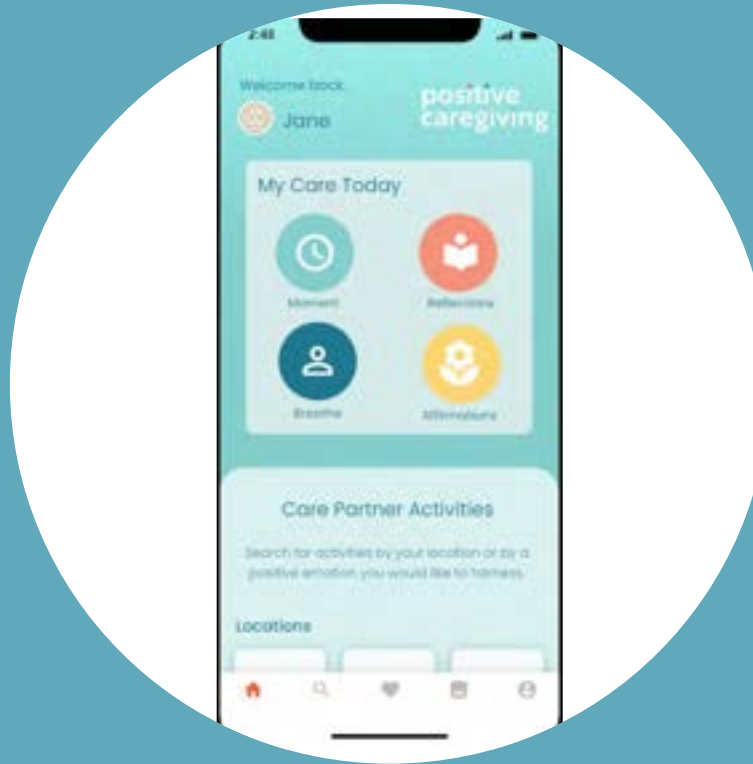
Step outside into the sun

Take a moment to go outside and savor the warmth of the sunshine on your skin. The natural light boosts serotonin in the brain, which helps you to feel more energetic, emotionally positive, and mentally focused.

The Positive Caregiving Method can be found in:



The Book available at multiple libraries and online stores including Amazon, B&N, Target, Walmart etc.



The Free **Mobile App** available for Apple and Android on the App Stores



Free Tools via www.positivecaregiving.com
Library

Gratitude, empathy,
forgiveness, love and awe are
universal human emotions. But
they are also skills that can be
practiced and strengthened,
eventually becoming the lenses
through which we see the
world.



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Feel free to reach out to me via email or Instagram anytime.

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Thoughts? **Questions?**

Ask me anything!



About the Cherry Blossoms

“This is the powerful symbolism of cherry blossoms: They transport the viewer from a literal plane to a symbolic one. The message is clear. Savor every morse. Don't squander your life. Don't give up on your dreams. Don't take anyone or anything for granted, especially time. Appreciate physical beauty, but realize it is superficial and fades; symbolic beauty persists in the mind, in the heart, and through time, as sure as spring will follow winter.”

- Kevin Kawamoto, 2003

