

The following excerpts will give you a glimpse of what's in store throughout

***Toolkit for Caregiver Emotions:***

**Here's what's inside:**

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### **From the introduction:**

Whether you eased into your role as a family caregiver or it was suddenly plopped into your lap, you probably feel overwhelmed.

I, too, expected to feel overwhelmed and to grieve the physical situation that brought on this shift from being an equal partner and spouse, to that of a total caregiver. That made sense.

But riding an emotional roller coaster on a patchwork quilt of random feelings was a distinct surprise. How rigorously my emotions affected my physical health, was a reality yet to be appreciated.

It seemed like everywhere I turned, there was something new to learn about caregiving, and - especially - about myself.

### **To snippets from my journal:**

18 May 2016

There's no way to prepare for this. Still continuing to be optimistic makes me think things will be easier soon.

Others marvel at my ability to carry on the way I seem to be doing; but yesterday, I did not have the upper hand. I know God did. He carried me through the deep sadness and tears.

The consistent trickle of ‘thinking of you’ and ‘praying for you’ cards is amazingly strengthening.

14 July 2016

One could liken my emotions as being almost bipolar. I was so sad and depressed when out on Tuesday; and upbeat, positive, and planning-oriented when out today.

I bought my first-ever paper planner book today entitled, “Hello 2017,” and I somehow felt so encouraged, hopeful, and joyful.

What a roller coaster ride!

I do have a future. There will be a future. It will look and feel like nothing I have ever experienced.

### **To understanding the bigger picture:**

Little did I know, there was still much for me to learn — especially about my own emotional and physical needs during that blessed time of caring for him.

You see, in a caregiving situation, there are *two* patients. Two patients with equally important, but very different needs. Two patients whose needs are intertwined and dependent upon each other.

Those patients are *you*, the caregiver, and the *loved one* you are caring for. Ignore the needs and welfare of the *one*, and the *other*

will not be cared for.

### **Concluding an exercise in mindful self-discovery:**

Checking in with yourself daily makes it easier to acknowledge the rightful importance of how you are feeling. Self-awareness is the first step in coping with your caregiver's emotions.

### **Each chapter ends with helpful summaries:**

Take away thoughts:

- Moving our swirling emotions out of the amygdala region of the brain into the logical part of the brain helps to tame them by putting them in the light of day.

Take away actions:

- Next time you are caught in a storm of emotions, take a moment to label what you are feeling through the written or the spoken word. Note how differently you feel afterward.

### **Part of the introduction to handling feelings of anger:**

Feelings of anger must be identified and dealt with. Acting out our anger is not dealing with our anger, and often only serves to compound bad feelings and hurt.

If you have acted inappropriately out of anger, it's a wake-up call that you need help. Do not put your loved one/patient into any

kind of mental, emotional, or physical danger. Stop what you are doing and apologize for your anger. Make sure they are safe, then leave the area, even if it's only to breathe.

Both you and your loved one are stressed out — no one feels in control — but you are the most in control. We can control our responses even if we cannot control the situation.

### **A tool to assess feelings of guilt:**

Reality Check for Perceived Guilt:

- What do I feel guilty about?
- Am I able to change any part of this situation?
- What is the evidence I could change in this situation?
- What is the evidence I could not change in this situation?
- What evidence supports my feelings of guilt?
- What evidence supports my being not guilty?

### **Digging deeper into resilience:**

We are uncovering a familiar theme. Take the thoughts and emotions out of the emotional amygdala part of the brain and transfer them to the problem-solving part by labeling them and creating a plan of action.

**Resilient people are:**

- solution seekers (Reframe: It's an engineering problem).
- those who know their own strengths (Self-awareness and personal mantra).
- people who know when to pause (*Body Scan and Mind and Emotions Scan*).
- caregivers who know where and when to get additional help (resources and village)
- friends who stay socially connected (village).
- able to create *Action Plans* for situations under their control (and know when it's not. *Control Questionnaire*).

**An introduction to a caregiver's holistic approach to self-care:**

Like a stained-glass window, each of us is a mosaic of thoughts, needs, and experiences, creating a beautiful whole. When one aspect of this whole is off-kilter, non-functioning, or missing, the entire whole is disturbed.

This inner-connectedness must be honored and addressed by the caregiver — it's what we call a Holistic Approach.

A holistic approach is more than skills. It's more than preparation. It's more than self-awareness. It's total mind-body-spirit health that is the sum of its parts.

## **The conclusion to the Daily Blueprint for Personal Power Through Self-Care:**

Relying upon a steady flow of self-care throughout the day can be the cornerstone of developing your sense of personal control over your mindset and emotions. While emergencies and reversals happen in your caregiving experience, you can trust on the anchor of self-care that you are developing to guide you through.