

# Caring for the Caretaker

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## Perspectives

The challenge for us in the caretaking profession is:

Is our personal glass 1/2 full or 1/2 empty?

While sitting on the Jersey shore, I read the following item in Newsweek that spoke to me of the challenges and the choices we face every day in the helping professions.

"What I am trying to get across is a sense of the dimension of the challenge without the exaggerated fears that often accompany it. Because either mankind is going to solve these problems, or mankind is going to cease to exist - it's getting that stark. Now you can either get hopeless over that, or you can say, 'Well, now, here's an interesting challenge. How are we going to get through this one?'"

We are invited everyday to get hopeless or to get active.

Our work is serious, life-saving and life-giving. We must continue to take our work seriously and we must learn to take ourselves lightly. We must learn to access joy in the face of adversity.



## Purpose

Today, in every school district, every home and every community I have visited, it gets tougher everyday. Many of us are tempted to repeat and enact the old adage,

"When the going gets tough, the tough get going."

If we constantly enact that belief system when the going gets tough, the result will be stress, tension, anger, bitterness and illness.

Let's practice a new twist on that old phrase by making it,

"When the going gets tough, the tough get loose."

Loose being defined as a creative, flexible, and with "can do" attitude.

## Passion

What do you pour yourself into?

What is your service that also brings you strength?

What is your commitment?

What is your enthusiasm?  
(Enthusiasm, En Theos, to be one with divine energy)

When do you feel one with divine energy?

Take some private/quiet time and develop a "joy list." A "joy list" is made up of people, places, and things that bring you joy.

Healthy, nurturing, joyful.

Your "joy list" combined with your daily affirmation, visualizations and meditation will become your primary resources to fuel your passion.

## Tools to stay loose, flexible, creative, and positive when we take ourselves too seriously

**Draw the line:** The last ten to fifteen minutes of the work day can be spent in quiet reflection or assessment, emotional showering, stress reduction or physical fitness activity or you could visit the "can do" room.

**The "Can Do" Room:** In every school I have worked in, I can find a room where all there is, are negative conversations. What's wrong in the building? Who's not doing their job? Complaints and moans. All too often, it is in the faculty lounge. I propose that the teaching staff or caring team create a "Can Do" room or at least a "Can Do" time.

**Only plus conversations:** Speak only of what's right with the building. Speak only of who's doing a great job. Speak only of positive experiences. The room could be filled with human resource information, books, video and audio tapes, articles;

anything on the courage, richness and joy of life and humanity. Also, be sure to include some materials, both written and visual, on laughter and humor. Norman Cousins, in his book "Anatomy of An Illness" taught us the healing power of laughter.

**Mini Vacations:** Learn to go on a mini-vacation. Everyday, any time of the day, we can escape and renew ourselves. Traditionally, there is prayer, meditation, or sharing your feelings with a trusted friend.

**Touchstones:** Keep handy little stones, shells or symbols of a loved one and/or a lovely time that returns when we hold the object. Jim Henson's Fraggles believe that a pebble increases in value every time we pass it on. What can you pass on today?

## Possibilities

Every day life offers us a variety of possibilities. The events that life offers are not in our control. How we respond to those events is in our control. The events and our response equals the outcome.

$$E + R = O$$

Haim Ginott had a wonderful reflective piece for all of us who are educators and parents.

"I've come to the frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element in the classroom. It's my personal approach that creates the climate. It's my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher, I possess a tremendous power to make a child's life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or humor, hurt or heal. In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated and a child humanized or de-humanized.

-Haim Ginott

Another teacher, 2,500 years ago, put it quite simply.

"Reaction is the Supreme Art in Life."

-Buddha

# Passion- Creating a “Joy List”

The following list of people, places and things bring me a feeling of joy and well-being. They connect me with the universe and my higher Power’s unconditional love.

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| <b>Nature uplifts me.</b>                  | I feel a part of the universe. I feel nurtured (natured). Nature exposes my child/animal   |
| <b>Play humors me.</b>                     | I suffer from terminal seriousness so a daily dose of play and laughter is essential. Laughter is the shortest distance between two people   |
| <b>Values guide me.</b>                    | As long as human beings teach, human beings will teach values. As a parent and educator, I never stopped my values-oriented education. My children and I continue to be in need of daily guidance. |
| <b>Commitments define me.</b>              | They help me make choices. Set priorities. They let me know what I believe in and what is important to me. They let me know where I can make a difference.   |
| <b>Simplicity focuses me.</b>              | Daily. No focus-no energy. KISS- Keep It Simple, Sweetheart.   |
| <b>Memories touch me.</b>                  | They are my emotional treasures. They help me on my mini-vacations and give me my daily touchstones.   |
| <b>Miracles inspire me.</b>                | The miracle of unconditional love. The miracle of physical and emotional healing. The miracle of forgiveness. Forgiving you and the greatest miracle, forgiving myself.                            |
| <b>Pain instructs me.</b>                  | I know it is a strange thing to be on a “joy list” but it helps me learn what to let go of. Letting go is the joy.   |
| <b>Death purifies me.</b>                  | Another strange one. The purification process brings joy. The beautiful melting (tears). “The soul afraid of dying, never learns to live.”   |
| <b>Friendship &amp; Love support me.</b>   | My marriage, my children, friends ,Twelve Step Support Groups. The angels in physical body who have floated in and out of my life.   |
| <b>God, My Higher Power loves me.</b>      | The surrender to love and acceptance. The intimate, personal relationship with unconditional love.   |
| <b>Creativity &amp; Art stimulates me.</b> | Color, shape, form, texture, light, flexibility and the process of creation. All part of intervening in this life.   |
| <b>Rituals &amp; Tradition anchor me.</b>  | Without these, I would have no history. I would be adrift. I would not fit. I need to fit. This world needs to make sense.   |
| <b>Quiet centers me.</b>                   | My meditation (listening to God) and my prayer (talking to God) slow me down. This is the time, everyday, when my soul catches up with my body. Or is it the other way around?                     |

I could go on and on. Examine your list and share it with your loved ones and your colleagues.

Lao Tzu once said that the truly successful man is one who can plan to sit by the river bank and dangle his feet in the water.