Norwell Executive Center
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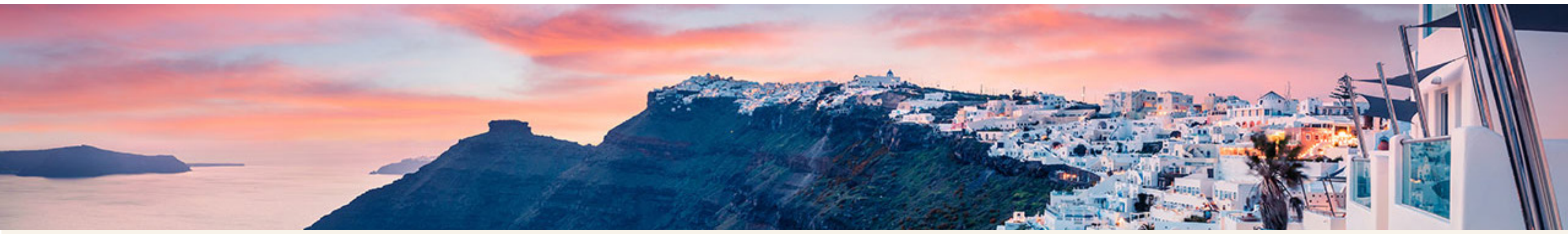
The Empowered Caregiver

Together With You on Your Ceresti Caregiver Journey



FEATURED ARTICLE

What I Wish I Had Known: Lessons I Learned When My Role Became Personal

For nearly 40 years, I've worked with family caregivers—teaching, coaching, and supporting those caring for loved ones with dementia. I've walked beside them as they faced the ups and downs of this journey. I thought I understood it well. But now, as I find myself caring for my own mother, I've learned just how different it feels when it's your own family, your own emotions, and your own daily life that's impacted.

I knew the facts. I had the training. I understood brain changes and behavior patterns. But what I wasn't prepared for was the *emotional weight* of being a caregiver. No amount of professional experience prepared me for the sadness of watching someone I love slip away in small, slow steps. Or the frustration I felt when she repeated herself for the fifth time in one conversation. Or the guilt that crept in when I lost my patience or felt like I just couldn't do one more thing.

Here's what I wish I had known before stepping into this role in my own life:

1. Knowing and *feeling* are two different things.

You can know how dementia progresses and still feel completely unprepared for what it does to your heart. Watching my mother become more confused, less independent, and sometimes a little frightened has been deeply painful. Even though I understand why it's happening, it doesn't hurt any less.

2. It's okay to grieve—again and again.

I used to tell caregivers that it's normal to grieve the changes they see in their loved one. But now I truly understand that grief can show up over and over, not just at the beginning or the end. Sometimes I grieve the version of my mom who could laugh at our inside jokes or cook her famous Sunday dinner. That's real, and it's okay.

3. Self-care isn't selfish—it's survival.

I've told caregivers for years to take care of themselves. But when I became one, I saw how easy it is to let your own needs fall to the bottom of the list. It feels like your loved one always needs something. But when I don't rest, eat well, or take a break, I can't show up for her the way I want to. Self-care isn't a luxury—it's necessary.

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4. You will feel guilty. And that doesn't mean you're doing it wrong.

Guilt is part of the journey. Guilt for not doing enough. Guilt for being tired. Guilt for being angry. Guilt for wanting a break. What I've learned is that these feelings don't mean I'm a bad daughter or a bad caregiver. They mean I'm human—and trying my best in a very tough situation.

5. Support makes all the difference.

Even though I've been in this field for decades, I still need support. I've leaned on friends, support groups, and yes, even Ceresti's coaching tools. You don't have to do this alone—and you shouldn't. **Asking for help doesn't make you weak. It makes you wise.**

Now, when I speak with other caregivers, I do so with a different kind of understanding. I can *feel* the fear in their questions. I recognize the exhaustion in their voice. And I know how much courage it takes to keep showing up, day after day.

If you're in the middle of this journey—or just starting—know this: You're not alone. You won't do it perfectly. And that's okay. What matters most is that **your loved one feels your love, even when words fail or memories fade.** That's the one thing dementia can never take away.

You're doing better than you think. Keep going.

As a Ceresti caregiver, you have support. Your Ceresti tablet is filled with helpful education to guide you through each stage of your caregiving journey. Whether you're trying to understand changes in behavior, learning how to manage your own stress, or you simply need guidance on what to expect next, the resources are right at your fingertips.

Perhaps even more important—*you have a Ceresti coach* who's here for you. Reach out whenever you need support, encouragement, or just someone who understands. Many of our coaches have either been on this journey before, or are on the path of caregiving right now.

You don't have to do this alone. We are right here with you.

For more caregiver tips, emotional support, and education, visit your Ceresti Caregiver Portal or contact your Ceresti Coach today.

Written by Marilyn Abrahamson, Brain Health Education Specialist at Ceresti Health

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If you know someone who could benefit from Ceresti and is on traditional Medicare, **please let them know that Medicare now covers the cost of Ceresti for people who have a diagnosis of dementia and live at home.**

Through the GUIDE model, Medicare began offering free access to Ceresti Health's caregiver program on July 1, and Ceresti is helping people with the eligibility and enrollment process. Ceresti will provide:

- Step-by-step help with GUIDE eligibility and enrollment

Once enrolled, Ceresti will also provide:

- 1:1 support from a dedicated, vetted Caregiver Coach
- Personalized dementia education, caregiving tools and resources
- Connection to a partner to fulfill Medicare's fully funded $2,500 respite care.

This program is fully funded by Medicare, with no out-of-pocket costs to patients or their family caregivers.

Learn more today: https://guide.ceresti.com/

BITE-SIZED TIPS FOR A BETTER BRAIN

How to Manage Overload and Stay Organized While Caregiving

Caregiving can fill your day with many tasks and worries. Mental overload can make it hard to focus. Try these quick tips to clear your thoughts and stay organized:

1. **Brain Dump**
   Spend five minutes writing every task, worry, or idea in your mind. No order needed. Seeing it on paper frees up mental space.
2. **Prioritize Three**
   Choose the top three items from your list. Focus on those first. Breaking tasks into small steps helps you feel in control.
3. **Use Simple Tools**
   A notebook, calendar app, or sticky notes can keep schedules and reminders in one place. Pick the tool that feels easiest to use.
4. **Set Time Blocks**
   Work in short bursts—15 to 25 minutes—then take a five-minute break. This "set and rest" method boosts focus and energy.
5. **Practice Mindful Moments**
   Pause and take three slow breaths when you feel stuck. A quick breathing break can reduce stress and clear your head.

Small steps add up. Try one strategy today and notice how a little clarity can make caregiving feel more manageable. A calmer mind helps you give better care and enjoy each moment.

SELF CARE FOR THE CAREGIVER

FINDING SUPPORT: HOW TO BUILD YOUR CAREGIVER COMMUNITY

Caring for a loved one with dementia is a big responsibility—and it can feel lonely at times. That's why building a strong support system is one of the most important things you can do for your well-being. You don't have to do this alone.

Start by looking for caregiver support groups in your area or online. These groups can give you a safe space to share your experiences, learn from others, and feel understood. Many caregivers say that hearing "me too" from someone else makes a big difference.

You can also build your own circle of support. Talk to family members and friends about how they can help. Even small things—like running errands or staying with your loved one for an hour—can give you a much-needed break.

Don't forget about professional support. Social workers, counselors, and care coaches (like the ones at Ceresti) can guide you and connect you with resources.

Lastly, remember that support goes both ways. When you open up, you invite others in. By finding your caregiver community, you give yourself the chance to feel seen, heard, and supported—and that can make all the difference.

You deserve help, just like your loved one deserves care. Reach out. You're not alone.

Your Ceresti caregiver coach is always here to help you find local support and resources that fit your needs. Just ask—we're here for you.

ESSENTIAL LEGAL AND MEDICAL DOCUMENTS CAREGIVERS SHOULD HAVE – A QUICK CHECKLIST FOR EMERGENCIES

Being prepared with the right paperwork can make a big difference during a medical emergency. Here's a quick checklist of important legal and medical documents every caregiver should have on hand:

- √ **Medical Power of Attorney** – Gives you the legal right to make healthcare decisions for your loved one if they can't speak for themselves.
- √ **Living Will or Advance Directive** – States your loved one's wishes about life-saving treatments and end-of-life care.
- √ **HIPAA Release Form** – Allows doctors to share medical information with you.
- √ **List of Medications and Allergies** – Keep it up to date and easy to access.
- √ **Medical History Summary** – Include diagnoses, surgeries, and hospital stays.
- √ **Health Insurance Card and ID** – Copies are helpful in case the originals aren't available.
- √ **Legal Power of Attorney** – Lets you handle finances, bills, or legal matters.
- √ **DNR Order (if applicable)** – A Do Not Resuscitate form must be signed by a doctor.
- √ **Emergency Contact List** – Include names, phone numbers, and relationships.

Keep paper copies in a folder and digital backups on your phone or cloud storage. Being organized now can reduce stress and save precious time later.

RECOGNIZING CHANGE

Pain or Discomfort: Recognizing When Your Loved One is Suffering in Silence

When a loved one has dementia, they may not be able to tell you when they're in pain or feeling unwell. This can make it hard for caregivers to know when something is wrong, but *there are signs you can look for.*

Pay attention to changes in their mood or behavior. Are they more irritable, withdrawn, or restless than usual? Do they make faces that show discomfort, like grimacing or frowning? Physical signs like trouble sleeping, changes in appetite, or guarding a part of the body can also be clues.

Watch how they move. A slower walk, hesitation when sitting down or standing up, or refusing to move at all could signal pain. Also, listen for verbal cues—even simple words like "stop," "ow," or "don't" during care tasks can be important.

If you notice these signs, talk with their doctor. Pain can come from many sources—*arthritis, infections, constipation, or other medical problems.* No one should suffer in silence, especially those who can't speak up for themselves.

As a caregiver, your careful observation can make a big difference in your loved one's comfort and quality of life. Your eyes, ears, and heart are their voice.