



I'm Fine, Thanks by Pat D'Andria

That is the life of a caregiver. You are always fine because the focus is always on the person that you care for. You are “just fine” because if you think of allowing yourself to be anything other than fine, your legs will come out from under you. You just keep moving along, all the while knowing that the person that you are trying to convince that you are “just fine” is you. It would have to be you; everyone else in creation can see the dark circles under your eyes and recognize the tension buzzing through your system like an overdose of caffeine.

Let us assume that it has been a while since someone in your life has had a diagnosis or an accident that leaves you in charge of everything. Not just them and their care, but everything from cooking and cleaning to paying the bills and getting the vehicles maintained. It might be accurate to say you had a few minutes to adjust to the whole idea before you had to start making some big decisions, and it has not stopped since then.

It is a certain bet that the personalities involved get more interesting. Not necessarily those directly involved, but all the folks that sort of buzz around just wanting to cause more drama; as if there is not enough already. Oddly enough, the drama that used to be so upsetting in life can become so tiny in the scheme of things when real life rears its head.

It's right about now that you get cocky. You think to yourself, “Stress? Ha! I laugh at stress. I have everything under control.” You have it all figured out, you are working, you have aides coming in and taking care of your loved one, you shop, you cook, you can find things—life is fine. Unexpectedly, you find yourself in the shower shaking and crying and you do not even know why. Ahhh. I am not so fine after all.

This is where you realize that you really do come into the picture. You must fit yourself in or it will not be o.k. If you have a counselor, go. If you do not have a counselor, you find one. You start to learn that you are still present and need to be cared for also. The only one to care for you is you.

There is a lot of talk about finding balance in your life. When you are a caregiver, balance is the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. You need to tie together different skills in the hopes that in unison they will deflect some of the stress in your life.

Remember that life was hard to deal with before you were a caregiver. Not that much has really changed; there is just a whole lot more of it and it feels so huge.

Attempt to find balance anyway.

Understand that you need to accept help from others with grace and they need to help, it makes them feel good. If all you do is give, you will come to resent it and get cranky. You need to make sure that you also receive from others; whether this is in the form of massage, a pedicure, manicure, getting your haircut—all those hands-on things that make you feel more connected. In an ideal world it would be nice to have your give/receive ratio be equal, but as a caregiver you will not get close to that. Shoot for what feels right for you.

Active relaxation is so helpful—meditation, self-guided relaxation, yoga, Tai Chi, or any form of exercise that works the knots out. Do something that helps you develop an ability to let stress slide off your body.

It is o.k. to think about you. Most of the time your focus is on the person that you care for. When you do start to think about your own needs, it feels uncomfortable, like new shoes. Get over it. It is so easy to lose yourself in all the “stuff.” Re-create a life for yourself, this is the perfect time to take a breath and think about what you really want for you.

Take a break from drama. The inconsequential “who said what about who” stuff that people love to lay at your feet. Just let it pass on by and pay no attention to it.

Swear off guilt forever. I could go on and on about this one. Just suffice it to say: Stop with the guilt already. Feeling it, giving it, or getting it.

Live in the moment and kick back and relax when you can. Few people understand what an honor it is to be someone's caregiver. Give yourself a good healthy pat on the back but hurry up; you have places to go and things to do.





Autumn

Word Search

W J L L I H P G O U R D B L S
 X E E R T A I W X M C N N H Q
 R F A L R R E D J B M I Z C J
 E L V I S V R B L I A K C L R
 B L E W X E E S T R G O M G R
 O A S O T S B N W O R B K N E
 T F B L K T M E O N V C D I B
 C C O L D G E D G V M K B K M
 O W L E J Q V N D N A M N A E
 C R F Y B O O M I N A T V R T
 M A P L E T N E W K M R L K P
 R F G N J U Y T G F P U O I E
 L E A F P I L E K K O M T K S
 B H S A U Q S G H A V C U U K
 A C O R N H S Z J O L D E P A

find these words:

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|--------|-----------|----------|-----------|--------|
| Acorn | Fall | Maple | Pumpkin | Squash |
| Autumn | Gourd | November | Rain | Tree |
| Brown | Harvest | Oak | Raking | Yellow |
| Cold | Leaf Pile | October | Red | |
| Corn | Leaves | Orange | September | |

Always find a reason to laugh



It may not add years
to your life but it
will surely add life
to your years



Upcoming Events:

- *Virtual Dementia Tour, Monday, October 7, 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.* - Bartholomew County Public Library. Participants should contact Sue Lamborn to schedule a session: 812-314-2784.
- *Breaking the Silence: Addressing Suicide Risk in Older Adults, Tuesday, October 22, 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.* - Mill Race Center, Columbus
- *Vaccination Clinic, Thursday, October 24, 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.* - United Way Building, 1531 13th Street, Columbus.
- *Care Partner Fair, Thursday, November 7, 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.* - Brown County Public Library, Nashville.
- *Managing Relative Caregiver Stress - A Powerful Tools for Caregivers Course, Thursday, November 14, 11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.*, United Way Building, 1531 13th Street, Columbus - First Steps Conference Room. For information or to register: 812-372-6918 Ext. 2402 or 2404.

Do you have an email address? Want to receive your newsletters electronically? Please submit your email address to jferri@thrive-alliance.org for future correspondence! If you desire a listing of caregiver support groups whether live or virtual please e-mail or call me at 812-314-2783. We also have a Thrive Alliance Caregiver Resources Facebook group. Please e-mail or call if you would like to be a part of the group. If you want removed from the mailings, please let me know as well.