



Finding the Humor

I worked with a woman who had a sign in her office that read, “May you always see the humor in the human condition.” As caregivers, this message is especially important because we have so many difficult things we are dealing with. It is easy to lose our perspective and become “terminally serious.” The good news is that a cure has been found for terminal seriousness: it is a perspective transplant!

How can we transplant our overly serious perspective with a more light-hearted approach? Here are some ideas you can try today...

1. View it through the eyes of a child. If you have spent any time with small children you know they usually haven't (yet) contracted terminal seriousness. This means they can and do see the silly side of any situation. So invite your inner child to come out and play!
2. Seek out the humor and the joy in life, even in the most difficult situations. In professions in which people are constantly bombarded by trauma they often develop the ability to see something funny in the moment – when to an outsider it might not seem funny at all. We can all benefit from recognizing that even in dark moments there may be something that can trigger our funny bone enough to keep us from sinking into the depths of despair.
3. Create silliness in your life. Loretta LaRoche is a humorist that encourages people to be silly in their day-to-day lives as a way of keeping stress at bay. On her very funny stand-up shows, Loretta takes the annoyances of life and puts a funny spin on them. It is a wonderful art we can all learn. Today, let yourself be silly...you'll be amazed at how your perspective will change.
4. Ask yourself, “If I were to die tomorrow, would this really matter?” We waste a lot of time not enjoying the moment to moment of life. Yet when people near the end of their lives, they often wish they had spent more time having fun. Eliminate this future regret by vowing to spend more time enjoying life. You don't have to run off on vacation to enjoy life- it is about your perspective, not your location or activity.
5. Take the Scarlet O'Hara approach...Postpone your worry. Tell yourself that you will worry about that tomorrow, but for today you are going to find something to laugh about. Given the fact that most things we worry about don't ever happen, there is real wisdom in postponing our worry! If it makes you feel better you can even schedule a time to worry. Limit yourself to that time – and then choose to let it go until another scheduled worry time. Postponing and limiting your worrying can help you have more moments of joy and happiness.



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Is there something in your caregiving journey that is causing you to have a case of terminal seriousness? If so, I hope you will try at least one of the suggestions above. You may find that it helps you more fully enjoy your caregiving role – and also creates more room for joy with your aging relative.

Dr. Amy