

**Dotsie Bregel,  
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(NABBW)**



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***Presents***

**Caregivers: It is Important to Care for Yourself**

***With***

**Lorraine Calhoun**

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## **Caregivers: It is Important to Care for Yourself! With Lorraine Calhoun**

**Dotsie:** Hello and welcome to the NABBW Teleconference that I'm sure will enlighten, educate, and empower you. I am Dotsie Bregel. I'm the founder of the National Association of Baby Boomer Women located at [www.NABBW.com](http://www.NABBW.com) and [www.boomerwomenspeak.com](http://www.boomerwomenspeak.com), which is the number one site for Baby Boomer Women on major search engines. Since launching Boomer Women Speak, I have been connecting, encouraging and supporting Boomer Women on a daily basis since 2002. I certainly have my finger on the pulse of this spirited generation by dedicating a great portion of my time creating opportunities that inspire women to explore their passions and live life to the fullest. My prayer is to embrace all women and provide them with the means to soar.

I'd like to get started this evening by introducing our guest, Lorraine Calhoun, who spent many years as an occupational therapist, working with patients and their families when she did home care. In 2004, she had the opportunity to experience the view from the opposite side as one of the primary caregivers for her mother who was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. Lorraine is now a Life Coach, and she coaches women who are building a plan for a successful life while taking into consideration their real life, at home responsibilities. She takes them through a seven step plan that takes caregivers, and also entrepreneurs, to a place of coping and resilience. This evening we're talking about the caregivers. Her website is [www.midlifetheownersmanual.com](http://www.midlifetheownersmanual.com) and she also hosts the site [www.act2consulting.com/](http://www.act2consulting.com/). So I just want to welcome you to the call this evening Lorraine, how are you?

**Lorraine:** Thank you, I'm really good. I'm really good and I'm really happy to be here. This is quite an honor.

**Dotsie:** Good, well we're happy to have you and we want to jump in and try to get as much information in this teleseminar as possible. One of the reasons I became interested in this topic of Boomer Women getting care was that I had read the *National Alliance for Caregiving*, which is located in Maryland, actually did a survey in 1998 about baby boomer women giving care. I found that one day and was kind of just browsing through it and really found it interesting. I mean it's almost ten years old, but the information that it provided, I'm sure is very true today. One of the things that really struck me was that seventy six percent of the women that they surveyed said that they would have liked to have more information on how to deal with the stress of caregiving. I thought that sounds like something that we should address with the Association. They also said, which I thought was interesting, that seventy one percent would have loved to have some "hands on" caregiving training. So between those two topics, I thought it would be a great seminar topic for us to discuss and really share this information with boomer women who are in the midst of doing exactly this. I continue to hear about these women who are pretty chaotic and hectic due to the

fact that they are giving care to so many people. I learned from you, Lorraine, that actually the Surgeon General has a prescription for caregivers and that really struck me, I never knew that before. I've always thought about the Surgeon General's information having to do with really serious things, such as cigarettes and alcohol. So I was surprised to hear that there is actually a prescription for caregivers. Would you be kind enough to tell us what that is?

**Lorraine:** Yea, it's actually in a PDF format and it's a full page, and it almost looks like a real prescription; and then he signs it at the bottom. His name is Richard H. Carmona, M.D.

**Lorraine:** He thinks that being a caregiver is one of the greatest gifts you can give to your loved ones, but he talks about how stressful it can be. As you care for your loved one, there are a lot of resources. A lot of times when we're in the midst of it, we just feel like we don't even have time to look at the resources, or we don't have time to ask for help, and it's one of the things that I would like to express to women is, if you feel that way, then you need to ask someone to help you; to ask for help. I know that sounds ridiculous but it's really true.

**Dotsie:** What were some of the ways that the Surgeon General actually said that we need to care for our self while caring for loved ones?

**Lorraine:** Well, the first thing he says, is to talk to your doctor if you feel depressed or anxious and we're going to be going over some of the signs, but he has crying more than usual, sleeping more or less, changes in your appetite, and lack of interest in all of your regular activities.

**Dotsie:** That all makes good sense, and I'm thinking back to a period of time when I was caregiver and other than the change in appetite, everything else rings true. What else was on that list?

**Lorraine:** He says to find out about all the different sources of support and help in your community, and he says to reach out to family members. Now this is what is difficult for women because we're used to not asking for help. We like to do everything ourselves.

**Dotsie:** Right and we're going to address that.

**Lorraine:** And then your area on aging and from the research I've done, it sounds like all the different states in the United States have that.

**Dotsie:** O.K., so it's an area agency on aging, Department of Aging?

**Lorraine:** Yes. And then one of the biggest things is to realize that your health matters. Recently Andrew Weil wrote an article and he – I usually liken it to putting the oxygen on yourself first. Well, he talks about consider yourself the

heart, and the heart takes the oxygen from the blood first before it can go anywhere else. So he says you have to be like the heart and take what you need first to make yourself healthy.

**Dotsie:** I've never heard that, that's good.

**Lorraine:** It's a wonderful metaphor.

**Dotsie:** Any thing else on that list?

**Lorraine:** Yes. Like with realizing that your health matters, making sure you have your check ups. This is something that I really feel is so important. You know, we need to get our mammograms, we need to get our pap smears, our dental check ups, all the things that are just regular check ups, but it's really important. And the flu shot if that's something you like to get or need to get. Then he says to be aware of the toll that stress can take on your health and we're going to be talking about that. Some times, you know you can go years and not even think about how stressed you are.

**Dotsie:** Is there anything else on that prescription for caregivers by the Surgeon General.

**Lorraine:** Yeah, one more thing, learn as much as you can about the condition that your loved one has and how it can affect all of you. Education is important.

**Dotsie:** Then I'd have to say that the Internet is an excellent source. I recall when my Mom was sick with cancer, my one sister was very involved in a cancer support group that was online, and it was through that group that she actually learned of a medication that she was able to tell my mother's doctor about. He was not familiar with the medicine and he really researched it and found that it wasn't perfect for my Mom, but he thanked my sister and said, this is something that I can use for other patients and he did a lot of research about it online and felt comfortable prescribing it for someone that it did suit.

So, the Internet I know, and a lot of these forums and chat rooms, has become a really welcome relief for people who are in caregiving situations. But oftentimes, the problem is finding time to get on those boards. I know that there are some assessments that we can actually find online, or in books, and I just wonder if you know of any. I don't want you to give the assessment because I don't think we have time for that, but if you could lead us to where we might find something like that and just tell us the types of questions that these assessments ask, so that we can decide if we are in the position as a caregiver to seek help.

**Lorraine:** Well, I found a really fantastic one. It's called the Caregivers Self Assessment Questionnaire and that's at the American Medical Association website. What I would recommend, if someone wants to look it up, is to do it and

take it into their doctor and let their doctor realize that they're having some challenges. Generally from what I've been reading, just being a caregiver is a red flag to a doctor, which I found really interesting.

**Dotsie:** Well, I think it makes sense. I was wondering if you had any statistics about how this stress is affecting boomer women, and I just have to throw something in here that is something that I think needs mentioning. Some people from the older generation have an attitude that, look women have always taken care of their families; you know what is the big deal? Why does this generation think it's so stressful? But what I like to point out is that at one point, all of the families were living on the same farm together, or on the same city block, or that type of thing. But what is different about our generation is that we are caregivers to our parents, or in-laws, or loved ones, whatever, but in addition to that, we're working.

The majority of boomer women are working full time, and many still have children at home or college-age students. Many have grandchildren, and I know there are some women who are really forced to decide whether or not on Saturday they watch their grandchild for their own child, or they go and take Mom food shopping, and to the doctors, and to have her hair done. It's a predicament, but the difference with our generation, and the reason I think that we are becoming informed, and are interested in being educated, is because that's what's different. Add a forty-hour or fifty-hour work week to everything else and that's what we've done. So I know that it is definitely affecting our health. What can you tell us about that?

**Lorraine:** About some of the statistics?

**Dotsie:** Yes

**Lorraine:** Well, apparently a lot of studies have shown the incidents of depression in caregiver's ranges from 18 to 47 percent and depression is also another risk factor for chronic illnesses. It can thicken your blood, it has something to do with the platelets, and I mean that's a risk factor as well.

**Dotsie:** Right, so not only might the person you're taking care of be depressed, you may also become depressed, is that what you mean?

**Lorraine:** Right. They say that they are not quite sure if the incidence of alcohol, increased use of alcohol, is raised because apparently some people it is and some people it isn't and that wasn't very conclusive. But anxiety is much higher in caregivers as with the people that aren't caregivers.

**Dotsie:** Are women having more heart attacks, and experiencing mental illness due to stress. Is this all tied in as a result of being in a caregiving position?

**Lorraine:** Well, most of the research focuses on the psychological aspect. They say that the caregiver burden is a physical, emotional, and financial burden. And most of the medical research was done on psychological aspects, but there was one really disturbing study, talking about the spouses and of course, these spouses would be elderly. I think it was for Alzheimer's and they had such a higher percent of deaths that was faster, like right after the patient died, or the person receiving the care, the elderly caregiver, had a higher risk of dying sooner.

**Dotsie:** Oh, sure, so that's not necessarily our generation caring, that's the generation of the person that's caring for the same generation pretty much, is that what you mean? Yea, that's understandable.

**Lorraine:** Yeah, and I would think you know, if the risk of being depressed is higher and people are more stressed with, for instance not getting enough sleep, not having enough social interactions with their own friends, if you have a prolonged amount of stress, that isn't good if you have a chronic illness like diabetes or something, or high blood pressure, it can do a lot of things that are hidden. I mean some stress is good, if it keeps you from running out in front of a car, you know what I mean, but it's this chronic low level stress that can be harmful to our bodies.

**Dotsie:** Well, you know, I have to say one of the statistics that I read in this survey that was done of the baby boomer women giving care, by the National Alliance for Caregiving, stated that sixty two percent sought help from health professionals. I was really surprised at that because when I look at my friends, I see women who are getting run down and just trying to maintain everything at home, and everything in their parents home, or whomever they're giving care to. Trying to keep their work going, keep groceries in the house, etc. and my friends are not seeking help. So I was surprised to see that sixty two percent sought help from some health professional for themselves; this was not for the person they were caring for.

Fifty five percent, now this part I believe, sought help from a relative, or a friend, and that's what I would have to say I see the boomer women that I come in contact with doing. They're going to their good friends, or their support groups of women, their colleagues at work, that type of thing, and just sharing the burden, unloading, and that was fifty five percent. So I was happy to see that women are getting help, because that is not something that I thought I would read.

**Lorraine:** Yes, that's interesting. I'm surprised. I know you said that most of your friends won't go to the doctors. I guess I wouldn't go to the doctor either. I went to like a counselor. I did a lot of things, and then my family made me do certain things. I waited until I was at the point where I was just crying all the time, or cranky and angry at everyone for no reason.

**Dotsie:** Right, so I guess you do get to the point where you have to reach out, and hopefully you're going to help us learn some of the ways to address these problems when we are in these caregiving situations. But it does seem that women become depressed when they remain in the caregiving role for a long period of time. Can you address some of the signs of depression? Now you just mentioned yourself, you know, you were either crying or cranky, but in addition to that, what are some of the signs of depression?

**Lorraine:** Well, some of them are one way or the other. Like one of the things is a disturbance in sleep. Some people sleep all the time when they're depressed. When I was taking care of my mother, I found I couldn't sleep at all. I was just up all night, and normally I'm a good sleeper. So I knew there was something wrong when that happened. Another thing is losing interest in what you're normally interested in. Feelings of guilt or worthlessness, decreased energy, inability to concentrate, that's a big one, and of course, with women at this age, sometimes we have that problem with the hormonal ups and downs. Changes in appetite. Some people gain weight when they're depressed, some people lose weight when they're depressed. That's a very individual thing. And of course suicidal thoughts, that's definitely something that needs a doctor's attention, or someone's attention. It's not anything to play around with. But a change in any one of those, like maybe four of those things would be a sign of depression.

**Dotsie:** And then at that time, you contact your doctor and that type of thing. What type of help is available? You mentioned a physician and a therapist, what other type of help is available?

**Lorraine:** One of the things that I personally utilized was a support group. Now on one hand, I go to an Alzheimer's support group once a month. On one hand, it can be really difficult. I get really sensitive, and hearing a lot of different sad stories is upsetting. But over time, you get such a bond with these people and actually, there was one time where their advice just made the biggest difference in my life, and I'll be thankful for it forever. Sometimes you get so wrapped up in your own problems that you need other people who aren't in the situation to look at it objectively. So there are support groups.

I think it's a really important time to reach out to friends. And it's not just one of those things you know, reach out, and vent. You need to be able to tell them what it is you need. I'd like a phone call once in a while, or I'd like someone to go to the grocery store for me, or I would love to have someone come and sit with my loved one for a half hour so I can take a walk. And that to me is one of the most difficult things, it was for me. And I think most women are because we always think, number one we can do everything either better than anyone else, or we don't have time to teach anyone how to do what we're doing.

**Dotsie:** Right, so that's why it's hard for women to ask for help and actually, I think we need to dispel that *super women* myth, because we are the generation



that was told that we could do it all, be it all and have it all. I think we were raised with that, and I think finally at midlife, we're dispelling that myth because we recognize, yeah, you can do it all, be it all, and have it all, but not without someone suffering, and it's usually ourselves. So I find that women at midlife are getting better at asking for help and it's probably because we've experienced something whether it's caregiving, or a depression, or birthing children, that type of thing, where we have been in the position that we just had to break down and say, *you know what I need help* and when we do that, we realize that it's not always a bad thing.

I always think of how happy I am to help other people. I was in a car accident and I wasn't reaching out for help, and I became clinically depressed. But it was during that time that I learned a lesson that it's okay to ask for help. And so I think that's something that as boomer women, we need to just dispel that whole *superwoman* myth and really reach out because we need to think about how much happiness it brings to other people to be able to pitch in when they know their friend is really down in the dumps and can really use a helping hand.

**Lorraine:** That's so true and most of us, we value that; we value that connection, we value helping someone. It's almost an energetic thing as well, because if we look at being able to receive is as important as being able to give, then it really helps the flow of energy.

**Dotsie:** Right. Well, one issue I think is that women need to learn in this area of caregiving is setting boundaries because, I mean otherwise, we're just saying yes to everything and being agreeable to everything that the caregiver asks for, and we're just going to run out of gas and unless we're healthy, we can't care for anyone. Can you address the issue of setting boundaries, and actually learning to say no?

**Lorraine:** That's a great topic, Dotsie, setting boundaries. I guess if we haven't learned it by midlife, then that's the time when we really have to learn about it. You know your boundaries are crossed, for instance, if you're caregiving and you're feeling either, you're not getting over a cold, or you're not sleeping, then you must know that it's too much, and it's crossing the boundaries that you need to be able to stay healthy. We're talking about boundaries and being able to say no, is that what you said?

**Dotsie:** Yes.

**Lorraine:** There's a new book I just got and it's so fantastic, it's something about the power of a positive 'no'. One of the things that the author talks about is when someone asks for something, you need to be able to think it through and well, what do I want to say yes to, with this question. And if you need to say yes to my basic health needs, then you can say no with much more grace. Another problem is that we feel selfish when we take care of ourselves. I think some of that is

genetic, or we inherit it culturally.

**Dotsie:** Right. Just to get back to that learning to say no, one thing that I once learned about saying no, is that by saying no to some things, we are saying yes to others. We need to be conscious of what we want to say no and yes to, and a perfect example is say, your Dad wants you to take him grocery shopping to two different stores so he can get the sale prices, and you only have a half an hour to run this errand. One thing that we can do is say, *“Yes I’m happy to get you the groceries, but today I’m going to have to get them myself Dad, I’m sorry I can’t take you.”* I don’t have time for that today, because really the important thing is that he has the groceries in the home, and that you have to set your boundaries and I know that is something that is really hard for me to do. But I think if we look at what they’re asking and try to figure out a way that we can say yes to a piece of it.

I mean, I recall my Mom would like me take her to the doctors and go out to lunch and I would love to do that and sometimes I did do that, but sometimes, I couldn’t take an hour and a half to go to lunch, too. I’d rather go to lunch than take her to the doctors, but she had to go to the doctors. So there are times when I had to say, you know what Mom, I can take you to the doctors, but I just can’t do lunch this time because it will make my day out of control. So, I really think that there are ways for us to say yes, while saying no, or saying no, while we’re saying yes, or whatever. Do you have any other examples of how we can do that?

**Lorraine:** Well, one thing that I’m trying to work on is when something gets asked of me, or I have to make a decision, I try to think of all the choices that there are. Like you just said, that was a great example. What are all the choices? Yes, you can take your father to two or three different groceries, and he can save a couple dollars, and by the way, were you talking to my Dad? He’ll go to five different stores.

**Dotsie:** But you know what, they have time and that’s something that I’ve tried to explain to my Dad. Believe me, my Dad is the sweetest person in the world and he never oversteps his boundaries, and he’s very understanding, so that’s why I feel like I can say to him, you know what Dad, I can’t do it like that today, but tomorrow lets meet for breakfast. Actually at this point in time of my life, he is more helpful to me than I am to him. I mean he’s just really helpful with our family, and watching the dog, and all these other things, so I’m really blessed in that situation. But there are things when sometimes we have to say no and set some boundaries. So I just didn’t know if you had any other examples or ways to teach us to say no, without feeling guilty.

**Lorraine:** Well, I do, I have some more. Another one is don’t say yes automatically. Automatically say okay, and then we’re really mad at ourselves. So it’s another thing to be much more mindful of what you’re going to say and

think it through. Think of all the different options, yeah, there's a lot of things. As far as feeling guilty, what I do if something is making me feel guilty, and this goes into the all the talk about *The Secret* and the *Power of Attraction*, guilt is not a very positive emotion. You don't want to be mired in some of these negative emotions like that, so I try to think of well, what can I do to make myself not feel guilty and again, it's thinking it through and giving a good explanation. You don't give a big excuse, that's another thing, or you don't say, well, I'll see what I can do. Its one thing to say I'll see what I can do if it's something you really want to contemplate. But if you know you don't want to do it, don't even say, well let me check and I'll get back to you, because then you know you're going to have to say no, and it's going to make it harder.

**Dotsie:** You know, years ago when I had three little kids at home and actually I was a stay at home Mom, but I was really involved, I took my stay at home job very seriously. I read a good book back then called, *When I Say No, I Feel Guilty*. I just recommend that book and the author's last name was Smith, I can't recall the first name, but I'm sure you could find it on Amazon. But it was called *When I Say No, I Feel Guilty*, and it really got into why women also feel that guilt, because men don't feel it as much and how to address the emotion and get behind why you feel guilty. You know a lot of it has to do with the way we were raised. I know I was raised Catholic and boy, we had a lot of guilt thrown on us in religion class, so I really just grew up feeling guilty about a lot of things. That was a good book, and I would recommend that for people who are in caregiving situations. So that's just another thought, I'll throw in there.

**Lorraine:** That's a good one; I'll have to look it up.

**Dotsie:** Yeah, that was a good one. How do we break down these self imposed boundaries? Can you tell us a little bit about that?

**Lorraine:** Sure, and it's amazing how this all ties in to everything else we've already talked about. A lot of times, that's how we've been brought up. We've been brought up to be nurturing, and caregiving, so we have ourselves saying, *well I really need to do it a certain way*, so you have a perception of what you think you should be like. Does that make sense?

**Dotsie:** Yes.

**Lorraine:** And then you have your value system. Some people may not have the value of being nurturing and there's nothing wrong with that, but a lot of us as women do have that, it's one of our values. I mean, I always had this little day dream that when my parents got a little bit older, I would be able to take care of them, they could move into my house and we'd be this cute little extended family. And you know, due to the fact that we can't really take my Mom out of her house because it would be more confusing, it's never going to happen. So it's like some of the little fantasies that we've grown up with aren't going to work. Things are

different now and also, society can put on different boundaries. Well, you know everyone assumes it's the woman that's going to do this.

**Dotsie:** Absolutely.

**Lorraine.** Don't think that a man is going to quit his job and stay home, although there are lots of very wonderful men that have done this, but it's much more common for the woman. So not only is she losing her financial money coming in, but she's also not getting as much put in Social Security, you know her rate is down. So it's almost like a two prong difficulty, because she's not making money, and she's also not putting in towards her Social Security.

**Dotsie:** Well, why do you think that we as women tolerate certain behaviors in our parents? I'm just curious about that because I hear women talk about taking care of their parents, and they may not even be in a full blown caregiving situation where some one is really sick and needs to be tended to several hours a day, that type of thing. And they're like you know, oh, my God, I call her and it's the same thing. She still treats me like I was a kid and then, I end up and I've told her I'm going to do this, that, and the other, and why did I do that? So why do we tolerate these behaviors?

**Lorraine:** Some of it is habitual, I would think. I can't really get into the heavy duty psychological thing, but you know you go into your parent's home and all these memories come back, and it is like you're a kid again. A lot of us are respectful so we don't want to argue with them. Another one of your columnists on your website, Barbara....

**Dotsie:** Barbara Friesner.

**Lorraine:** She does a wonderful job explaining why our parents are the way they are, and she talks about different generations.

**Dotsie:** Right I've interviewed her about that.

**Lorraine:** That's a good reference to work on that. I don't have it all committed to memory.

**Dotsie:** Well, her web address is [www.agewiseliving.com](http://www.agewiseliving.com)

**Lorraine:** She's fantastic; I read all her stuff.

**Dotsie:** Yes, actually I think I've interviewed her a couple times. You know, another website that I would like to mention just while you're speaking of that is from another member of ours and her name is Chloe, and her site is [www.eldercareconceirageblogspot.com](http://www.eldercareconceirageblogspot.com), and she Blogs about a lot of these same topics. So you might want to look her up in the member database, or

perhaps you've already connected with her.

**Lorraine:** There's a Chloe on the call too.

**Dotsie:** Oh, there is? Okay, well, good, good, yes because she has written the book called *What Happens Next* and it's a family guide to visiting nursing homes and even more than that, just really caring for aging parents, and this exact topic.

**Lorraine:** What is her website again?

**Dotsie:** [www.eldercareconcierage.blogspot.com](http://www.eldercareconcierage.blogspot.com). I'm not sure she may also have [eldercareconceirage...](http://eldercareconceirage.com)

**Chloe:** Dotsie, its [www.eldercare101.com](http://www.eldercare101.com).

**Dotsie:** Oh, yes, but you also have a Blog spot that I've read too, right?

**Caller:** No, there's another [www.eldercareconcierage.com](http://www.eldercareconcierage.com), but she's out in the Midwest some where.

**Dotsie:** All right, I'm sorry, I'm glad you were on the call so I could give the right information. So it's [www.eldercare101.com](http://www.eldercare101.com). Good I'm glad you knew how to speak up and not still be muted, so thank you for that.

**Chloe:** Well, I un-muted because I heard you saying the website and I said no - that's not the one.

**Dotsie:** Sorry, sorry. Hopefully you'll have some questions or comments at the end.

**Chloe:** I do.

**Dotsie:** Good, I'm glad you're on the call. Thank you.

**Chloe:** We have to get those websites exactly right.

**Dotsie:** That's right absolutely, that's right. So anyway, we were talking about tolerating behaviors in our parents. I just have this little story to share that, it's really sad, and I still feel guilty about it, but my Mom and I were really close and there are five of us, and she was close to all of us, but she could kind of take things out on me at times because, she could. One day, oh gosh, it was like a month before she died, she was just really letting me have it for some of the stuff that I had done around to help her. I was just, Mom, you know, why are you treating me like this? What is the story? You don't do this to anybody else and it was perfect because we had a good opportunity to talk.

I was really speaking in anger to begin with, which is why I feel guilty, but it was one of these things where I just tolerated this behavior because she always felt like she could kind of dump on me. You know, I guess it's a blessing in disguise, but it was part of our relationship, and so I just thought I would share that. So I overreacted, and then we got to a place where we were able to talk about it, which was actually a good thing. But I guess there was something in me that said, I just can't take this any more. That's one of the reasons I wanted to mention, why we tolerate it, and I think it's just habitual, it's what we're used to. So, do you have anything else to say about that, or shall we move on to another question?

**Lorraine:** Well, that story was really profound when you think about it. I guess sometimes if the behaviors are really pushing a button on us, then maybe it is an opportunity to explore it further.

**Dotsie:** Right. Let's talk a little bit about boosting our self esteem during these situations. Let's say we decided we need help, we've learned ways to reach out to friends and families and ask for help, whether it's shopping or a ride to the doctors, or a meal or whatever it is. We're learning to ask for help. We're even seeking professional help. What are some other things that we can do to boost our self esteem in these situations, that we can really do something to take care of ourselves, like set apart a little time or something in each day or week, if it's that bad, to do something for ourselves. Can you address that a little bit?

**Lorraine:** Yes. I think with a lot of people an important thing would be on a day-to-day basis, like you said, is to take the time to do your very basic self care. And that's whatever it is that makes you feel good, whether it's a shower, or a bath. Not to eliminate it, I know that sounds crazy but when you're really busy with caregiving, sometimes you don't even feel like you have the time for a shower. And maybe to keep your grooming the way you want it to be. Make sure you don't miss your hair appointments. I remember one time I was at my parents, and this is really funny. If I like shoes, I'll buy them in a couple different colors, and I have these sandals that you just slip on and when I sit down at the computer, I would just take my shoes off.

Well, I was in a rush to take my mother to the doctor and I just sat at the chair, *and* I put my feet in the sandals. Well, when I got there, the nurse looked at me and she said, "Are your shoes supposed to be that way." I had one black one, and one red one. They were the same exact shoe, so they felt fine. And I thought you know, I really need to take the time to sit and feel good about how I look. For some people, that might not be important but for me, it is important to feel that I am groomed, and I can always tell when things are not good. I have the baggy sweatpants on, and the straggly hair, and that's a good sign. Because how can you feel good about yourself if you're not taking care of yourself?

**Dotsie:** Right, so just make time to do a little reading. I'm a very spiritual person.

For me it's like reading the Bible, journaling, or that type of thing. For some women, it's baths and getting together with friends, or maybe a manicure, just something. But I know I've been in the middle of really intensive caregiving situations, and I know that there are times, it's just squeezing it in. Fortunately, in the situation that I was in, I'm from a family of five children and four of us live close enough that we could be involved in everyday care. And we just really broke it up and made a schedule, which I think is really important to mention on the call, and then we have one sister who lives out of state and when she came to town, she lived with my parents for five days and all of us got a humungous break. So whenever we knew she was coming to town, we did what we could to see her, but we really tried to stay away, let her have her time with my Mom, and then it was our time to kind of breathe again, and spend more time with our families and take care of ourselves. So, it's nice if you're in a situation where you have siblings who will help, and sometimes women have friends who will help if they are close enough to them.

One thing I found in the *Baby Boomer Women Giving Care* survey was that over thirty one percent of the Boomer Women in this study were spending over twenty hours giving care. So if you, and I know sometimes it's less than that, and sometimes it's more than that. But if you're giving twenty hours of care and you're working forty hours a week at least, that's a lot of your waking hours. I just thought it was interesting because these people weren't always necessarily in intensive caregiving moments. So some people are spending twenty hours week, some Boomer Women are spending twenty hours a week giving some sort of care to a parent. Whether it's just the shopping and the doctors, and writing checks, and cleaning, and just anything it might take to help them maintain their lives, and I just think that's a lot of hours when you're not necessarily in a really intensive situation.

**Lorraine:** It is a lot of hours, definitely.

**Dotsie:** We talk about reducing stress and what can we do, and some times we have to do the bare minimum to stay sane, because there just aren't enough hours in the day, but I think that's when we have to step back and remember the saying 'no' thing.

**Lorraine:** Absolutely and that's a big lesson to learn, and it doesn't mean it has to be forever. There are certain things you do have to; I mean, you do have to have some social fun and all because you have to remember that you're not going to be a caregiver forever.

**Dotsie:** Yeah, it comes to an end, and then you're like, oh gosh, I remember that, I was really in a valley after my mother died. Because you almost feel like you go from everything to nothing. It's just unbelievable, but you have talked a little bit, and I'll just give you a couple of minutes before we take some questions, about the *Law of Attraction*, can you share how that can be helpful for caregivers?

**Lorraine:** Sure. And I think that actually, eliminating all the big fuss that's coming out now, it really is kind of spiritual too. So it just means that like attracts like and what you focus on, will expand. So if you're going to focus on all the negative aspects of the caregiving, that's how you're going to feel. It's just going to keep growing in you. But if you were to focus on what you're grateful for, like if you have a moment, like you were talking about shopping with your Dad, or going to lunch with your mother, I mean what a blessing that is. If you can focus on the good part of it, the gratitude and having a lot of gratitude, even when you don't really feel it, but think about it, that will help to bring more of that good stuff into your life. Now, we didn't make these situations come into our life because of something we did or thought, but we can certainly, by using the *Law of Attraction*, I think we can certainly change our reaction to them. I found it very helpful for me.

**Dotsie:** And I would even recommend a gratitude journal during the intensive caregiving times, and if you can focus on the facts, like one thing that I recall from when my Mom was so ill, was that my siblings and I got closer than we had been since all of us had lived at home, because we were intimately involved in one another's lives. We know which child had cheerleading, and which child had soccer, and we just knew each other's schedules inside and out, and we saw so much of each other, and it was such a blessing. And my mother loved that; she loved that piece of it.

So if you can focus on those types of things, and really use the time to affirm the people that you're caring for, if you use that time to affirm their lives, it can be a very uplifting situation, and I think that's a good way to kind of end this conversation, is it doesn't have to be so dark and heavy. You can kind of lighten things up and take a friend over to play cards. That way you can see your friend *and* take care of the person at the same time. There are just other ideas that can really lighten things up. We did a pajama party at my Mom's one night. All the girls in the family spent the night. We slept on the floor, and sofas, and it was a really fun time and great memory.

**Lorraine:** That is great.

**Dotsie:** So, I just think that we need to lighten up and realize that it doesn't have to be a depressed time, that it can be a joyful time where we really just celebrate being with our loved ones. I want to open up the lines because it sounds like Chloe might have a question or comment, so if anyone else has anything to say, just push the six button and then we'll be able to hear you. Does anybody have a comment?

**Chloe:** Yes, it's Chloe. Very, very nice. It was really a good teleconference. A couple of things, you know, talking about how you can bolster yourself. I'm a firm believer in daily affirmations. To have a good list of affirmations and say them,



post them around the house. On your refrigerator door, on your mirror in the bathroom, whatever, but it does make a difference, you know, to be able to say that a few times a day when the going gets rough. I do have a question. As a matter of fact I just got a call today from a caregiver and her mother is basically living alone, but this woman has hired any number of professional caregivers to come in, and this woman keeps firing all of them. Then she won't do the things that she needs to do for herself, which includes taking her medication etc. etc.

This woman that called me, because I'm involved with caregiver issues too, she is beside herself. I just want to know what your take is on it because you know she was saying today, *I just have to keep away from them for a while*, meaning her brother as well, because he has been absolutely no help and very critical of what she tries to do. So her mother keeps firing all these people and she said, "Well, I told her that she can make the call, and she can hire them herself." And I thought well that's, you know, the woman is capable; she's not mentally deficient. She's got all her faculties, but she just happens to be one of these very demanding people. I said to this person that called me, your mother doesn't feel like she's in control of anything. So maybe she does need to do the hiring. How do you feel about that?

**Lorraine:** Which one of us do you want to answer?

**Dotsie:** Go ahead Lorraine you address it.

**Lorraine:** Well, I would guess that, that was a fantastic idea, because I think its true a lot of times, they feel as though everyone is telling them what to do, so legally if they're not mentally deficient or whatever, legally you kind of do have to leave them to their own devices. Unfortunately, sometimes it happens that they'll fall or whatever, and then, they do lose everything if they have to go into a nursing home.

**Chloe:** You feel that what I said to her was appropriate?

**Dotsie:** I do Chloe, and I'll share the reason I think it was appropriate. It is because I was in a situation with a loved one who needed a caregiver, and he insisted on being involved in the interviewing because he was the person that was going to be seeing this caregiver face-to-face. So in my opinion, I think it only makes sense that they be involved in doing that, because then you know, everybody has a different personality, so really they should be able to find a person that suits them best. And actually when we let him do that, we were really fortunate, we ended up hiring someone that was actually a caregiver for a friend who had been to his home with that friend who needed care, and to play 'Upwards' or some game, and he really liked the way she treated his friend. So what we ended up doing was hiring her to come in one full day to help him, and this was a while back and she's still in the picture. So I think giving the power to them as long as they're still capable of taking it, is a really great answer.

**Lorraine:** That's really true. Because I know with my own father, sometimes he would complain about a caregiver that we hired, and he was right, and we had to make some changes.

**Dotsie:** Yeah, they know best, and if they're the person that's going to be there, then they should have a say in who they're going to be spending their time with. That's what I think. Do you have any other comments Chloe?

**Chloe:** Just one other one, this has come up a number of times for me also, and I just wanted to throw it out there for anybody who is listening. People are afraid to go away on vacation when they have a loved one that they're caring for. Even if that loved one is in a long term care facility or assisted living, and I always say, when our kids were young, what did we do when we needed to go out, we hired a babysitter. So think of it that way.

I've done a lot of traveling, I have traveled all over the world for business and pleasure and every time that I was away while my mother was still in the long term care facility, I hired a woman who happened to also be my pet nanny and trained her as far as how I wanted her to visit. I paid her what I thought was appropriate, and she would visit my mother twice a week at the long term care facility and she was wonderful, absolutely wonderful with my mother. I just can't say enough about this woman and it worked out beautifully. I mean you can send cards, if the person can speak on the phone, which my mother couldn't because she had a hearing disability; you know, you can call, you can send cards daily, but people feel so guilty about going away. I had to talk to a woman like a Dutch uncle to convince her to go away for a weekend with her husband. I said, look you could lose your husband before you lose your mother.

**Dotsie:** Very good point.

**Chloe:** I said, think about it.

**Dotsie:** Right, and Chloe what you're stressing is that this vacation is a part of taking care of ourselves. We cannot be expected to never get a break, and you know unfortunately, your Mom couldn't talk by phone, but actually cell phones are great for situations like this. If people want to go away for a weekend and they feel guilty, and they want to check in by phone, you know each day just to say Hi, I know I don't think I would want to do that, but that's a possibility, too.

But I think hiring someone to actually do the visit, and then sometimes even asking friends, maybe they have a good friend who is still living. You know, I'm not going to be in town can you please – I did this for a friend of mine once, while her Mom was ill. She and her husband went away, and I went over on the long Saturday, that she was going to be gone, and broke up the day for her mother by taking lunch and just hanging out and talking with her.

**Chloe:** It can be done any number of ways, but people have to get past that guilt feeling, because there is nothing to feel guilty about. You can't be good to others unless you're good to yourself first. That's my feeling. Well, you have been wonderful.

**Georgia:** Can I make a comment?

**Dotsie:** Yeah, sure comment.

**Georgia:** I know we're about out of time, but I would like just a minute.

**Dotsie:** Okay, sure, go ahead and then you know what after you speak I'm going to wrap things up so stick around, so go ahead.

**Georgia:** I just wanted to say, and you already touched on this Dotsie, is when you're caring for a loved one, I cared for my Daddy for over four years and he had dementia, and at the same time my mother had breast cancer, so I had a double whammy, and I can tell you right now, that keeping a journal is just imperative. If you can keep a journal, not only are you handing down a legacy to your children for them to read what went on in your life, but you're also recording precious moments that you spent with the last hours or days, or weeks of their lives. And we have so many humorous things that actually happened during that time frame, and what I found is, when me and my four sisters get together for Thanksgiving, or whatever with Mother, who is a survivor – Yay – we have a tendency to capitalize on all of these good things, and the funny things that happened, and we even pull out the journals.

So keeping a journal is really a good therapeutic thing to do for many, many reasons. And the other thing is that I think there needs to be more education for people about Hospice. People are so afraid of Hospice when they don't realize what a godsend it is toward the end of your loved ones life. I know we were all going, no, no, no, nobody needs to be with our Daddy when he dies but us until we found out what they did, and what angels they are. So I think that other education, or maybe if you have a friend that's in that situation, you could just share with them the value of Hospice and what they did in your life, and how they helped your family, that it would be a wonderful thing to do. I just wanted to mention those couple of things.

**Dotsie:** Yes, very good and you know it's interesting, because we went through something very similar with Hospice, and it wasn't until we were actually in Hospice care that we figured out what a good thing it was.

**Georgia:** Oh, it's wonderful. They're angels.

**Lorraine:** And it also goes with our boundaries and taking care of ourselves.

**Georgia:** Yes, it does.

**Dotsie:** Absolutely. Well, does anybody else have a comment before we wrap this up? Okay, What I'd just like to say in closing is that Lorraine has a freebie for you, if you're interested, do you want to tell us about that?

**Lorraine:** Oh, sure, it's a little mini-audio course and it's at my website – [www.midlifetheownersmanual.com](http://www.midlifetheownersmanual.com), and there's also a free E-Book and you can download that, and it's something about – *The Secret Life of a Serene Baby Boomer: Seven Steps to go From Frazzle to Fabulous*. And its little things you can do throughout the day to make yourself a little less frantic or stressed out.

**Dotsie:** Okay, good, so you can get those. One of those is a free audio mini-series on the topic of caregiving, and the other one is a free E-Book, *Seven Steps to Go From Frazzled to Fabulous to Reduce Stress*, and that can be found at [www.midlifetheownersmanual.com](http://www.midlifetheownersmanual.com). And the other thing is that I know Lorraine has a list of resources, some of them are websites, and some of them are books. Do you want to tell us the top three websites for caregivers that you would recommend?

**Lorraine:** Sure.

**Dotsie:** And then maybe just a couple books, and then if anyone on the call is interested they can always email Lorraine. Lorraine you want to give them your email address?

**Lorraine:** Sure, it's [lorraine@act2consulting.com](mailto:lorraine@act2consulting.com).

**Dotsie:** And what websites would you say that you think would be the best, the highest recommended?

**Lorraine:** Okay, I'm sure Chloe's is going to be a great one. I can't wait to get on there. And that was [www.eldercare101.com](http://www.eldercare101.com), and then there is [www.caregiver.org](http://www.caregiver.org), and that's just one [www.caregiver.org](http://www.caregiver.org) and there's another one [www.caregiving.org](http://www.caregiving.org), the [www.agewiseliving.com](http://www.agewiseliving.com) is really nice. There was one [www.sharethecare.org](http://www.sharethecare.org) and then Liza Gibbons has a new one, it's called Liza's place. It's [www.leezasplace.org](http://www.leezasplace.org).

**Dotsie:** Then I'd also like to mention Barbara Friesner who is an Associate with the **National Association of Baby Boomer Women** and her address is [www.agewiseliving.com](http://www.agewiseliving.com).

**Lorraine:** Did I say that, I meant to?

**Dotsie:** Well, we mentioned it during the call. Okay, and any books?

**Lorraine:** There's one that I really like, it's called *How To Care for Aging Parents*, by Virginia Morris, and then *Caring for The Parents Who Cared for You*, and that's by Kenneth Sciletti, and I also like the *Wisdom of Menopause* by Christine Northrup because that has some things, some of the emotional and psychological things that we talked about, saying no, and boundaries and all.

**Dotsie:** That's a good recommendation because it's not something that you would probably find when you're looking for caregiving books, so that was *The Wisdom of Menopause*. Well, I think that about ties it up. Do you have any last words of wisdom for us this evening, Lorraine?

**Lorraine:** No, this has been great. I guess the biggest thing I would want to tell the women is just ask for help. It's the best thing you will ever do for yourself, and get to dream your dreams.

**Dotsie:** Very good. I just want to say thank you for being on the call and for all the good information. I hope that the women on the call have learned some new information and learned about some new resources, so that they can continue on this path, of trying to take care of themselves, while caring for others. Thanks everyone for being on the call and have a great night.