The Gift of the Caregiver
This book is dedicated to a life-long caregiver, Beverly DeMeo, who works hard to maintain balance in her life while brightening the lives of others.
Days of darkness
Days of light.
Days of comfort
Days of fright.

Emotions felt
Beyond compare
The gift of life
A gift to care.
“My purpose in life is to be a caregiver,” she told me. So many people review their lives and never feel connected to others, to life itself, but not this woman. For her mother, for her husband, for her community, she is a caregiver with love. She knows the gifts of the caregiver as do many women and men who choose to work at the bedside in long-term care, in home care, in hospitals and those who work behind the scenes to support caregiving. To be a caregiver is a gift. The caregiver receives many gifts along the winding journey. Caregivers are nursing assistants, home health aides, family caregivers, and others who provide safety, comfort and love to residents, clients and family members.

This book is a gift for caregivers with bits of wit and wisdom to nourish, inspire, and help you find the balance needed for the winding road of the journey. We, the author, the editor, the publisher, and all those whose stories and thoughts and experiences are shared here invite you to take a few minutes to read from this book in any order, whenever you want to be refreshed, to celebrate yourself and all the caregivers in your life. You enrich our lives, you save our lives, you bring joy and hope in times of despair and you laugh out loud at life’s antics. We are truly grateful.
Within every problem there is a lesson. Release the problem and embrace the lesson.

Life is a series of problems to solve and it is from working through life’s challenges that we grow. Next time a problem arises, instead of being put out by it, consider what life is trying to teach you.

I am in the right place at the right time doing the right thing in the right way.

“I braid her hair. She likes that.” Wanda is a home health aide in Georgia who smiles with pride as she talks about a client she visited for a very long time. “We are like family.”
What I can laugh at,  
I can cope with.

Does your life ever seem out of your hands?  
Someone said having control of your life is like a  
toddler in the back seat, sitting in a car seat with  
a steering wheel, thinking he is driving the car.  
Give yourself the gift of a humorous perspective.

Laughter lightens the load.

Tom worked the evening shift and had a  
distinctive, joyful, full-body laugh. You would  
recognize it anywhere. When he laughed, we all  
laughed. We teased him endlessly about that  
laugh, but loved it. We needed his laughter.  
Share yours.
Plan something to anticipate with joy.

Fran, a friend who was also a nurse, loved pigs. I saw a magazine pattern for a pig pillow made of pink satin and decided to make it for her as a surprise. I had to enlarge a pattern, shop for the satin, and find pearls for eyes. Not having much time at night after work, it took a number of days to finish the project. But I anticipated my sewing time with joy, and it renewed my energy. What can you plan to anticipate with joy?
Laugh out loud!

How long has it been since you laughed out loud? What makes you laugh? Is it reruns of the *Three Stooges*? Do you have a favorite old movie? Do you have a favorite comedian? Do you laugh at humorous greeting cards? Add humor to your life so you can have a good laugh. Suggest that residents and clients select humorous videotapes or television shows. Laughter does a body good.

Humor helps.

A nursing assistant broke his leg and was forced to wear a cast. He got tired of answering the question, how did it happen? He had slipped on some water in his kitchen and was embarrassed. Finally when someone asked the question one time too many, he answered, “My boss appreciates my work so much that she throws rose petals at the door when I am coming in and I slipped and fell.” A good laugh was had by all.
Laugh at yourself before somebody else does.

Have you ever tripped over your own feet and then looked around to see who was watching and would think you were clumsy? Next time, get up and laugh at yourself. People will think you have great poise and high self-esteem.

God has a sense of humor and I am giving Him some great material.

Next time you have a series of things that go wrong in your day, repeat this one liner to yourself. Humor helps us reframe how we see life and gives us back a sense of control.
Enjoy your inner giggle.

When you have to stand in lines, be a people watcher. Chuckle to yourself over a child at play. Look for things to make you smile. This is good practice in building your ability to find humor in life, which is an important skill for a caregiver.

Develop your comic vision.

A nurse manager keeps a pair of those big clown sunglasses in her desk. When the day is stressful for staff, she puts them on and walks down the hall. Everyone has a good laugh, takes a deep breath, and starts over.