



Altenheim Resource Services

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CAREGIVING: WHY WE DO IT with Volunteer Editor: Jeanette Wojcik November 2025

It's National Caregiving Month. There are probably a million articles out there on how to be a better caregiver, the challenges of caregiving, the tasks a caregiver needs to do, the financial implications of caregiving, taking care of yourself, becoming a caregiver, caregiver support, and every other aspect of caregiving. All of this information is necessary because [AARP](#) estimates that one in four Americans is a caregiver. However, few articles address the "why" of caregiving.

One of my favorite caregivers, [Roslyn Carter](#), has written "There are only four kinds of people in the world – those who have been caregivers, those who are currently caregivers, those who will be caregivers, and those who will need caregivers." Maybe part of the "why" of being a caregiver is to build a system where we, when the time comes, can have access to the loving care provided by a caregiver. But the "why" of caregiving is more than that.

Caregiving can bring many rewards. In a study conducted by [The Pew Research Center](#), 88% of Americans found caregiving to be rewarding. Some of those rewards include a deeper appreciation of life, feeling needed, growing a relationship, establishing family traditions, a sense of accomplishment, learning or improving skills and feeling good about yourself.

In the book [And Thou Shalt Honor: The Caregiver's Companion](#)*, Beth Witrogen McLeod (editor) writes "This can be a precious time if we approach the caregiving role as a calling rather than as an obstacle to achieving personal goals. Caregiving truly is a spiritual practice. . . We are asked to expand ourselves and be open to change. We are asked to comfort, to guide, to love. We are asked to listen, to reassure, to advocate. Most of all, we are asked to trust life in a way we never thought possible."

As [a family caregiver](#), we slow down and become fully present to someone we love. Being a caregiver we are able to provide not only personal help and encouragement but real love. We learn to understand life's beauty. Caregiving is a shared human experience and reminds us that we are not alone at any age in this world. The sense of fulfillment in making a difference in another person's life is immeasurable.

For many, family caregiving is a spiritual journey. They find strength in the tenets of their faith and put these into practice in their caregiving. [Home Instead](#) and [Guideposts](#) offer ways to incorporate faith traditions and beliefs into family caregiving including attending or watching a religious service, sharing or reading prayers and scripture together, singing or listening to hymns (music can have a dramatic impact on loved ones living with dementia). The [Roman Catholic Diocese of Norwich, CT](#) recommends that family caregivers take time for prayer. "Taking time . . . gives us ways to practice . . . giving up control, expressing honest feelings, finding rest and renewal, and experiencing forgiveness. . . prayer puts you in a place where you are not alone."

Caregiving matters "because we learn to honor life by allowing it to unfold on its own. It matters because we learn to be more appreciative of every moment. It matters because caregiving demands from us the best we have – body, mind and soul," writes Beth Witrogen McLeod in [And Thou Shalt Honor](#)*. William H. Thomas, M.D., Founder of Eden Alternative, offers his reasons for becoming a family caregiver in the same book, "We do it because we can see through the withered husk of the body. We can see the human spirit still pure, still complete, still beautiful. There is honor in the work of caring for another, and that honor is the most human of all things."

*You can also check your local library to see if they have a copy or if they can access a copy of "And Thou Shalt Honor: The Caregiver's Companion". You can also check [Internet Archive](#), [eBay](#), and [Half Price Books](#).