

PRACTICAL PHILOSOPHY FOR COAS · NO. 1

Everyday Philosophy for Caregivers

Finding Meaning in Small Moments

Caregiving is often defined by what it asks of us: time, patience, attention, energy. But it also offers something rarely talked about — a daily encounter with some of philosophy's oldest questions. What does it mean to live well? What do we owe to one another? What makes a moment matter? These aren't abstract puzzles. They live in the cup of coffee made for someone who can no longer make it themselves, in the quiet pause after a difficult conversation, in the choice to listen rather than fix.

The Stoic philosopher Marcus Aurelius wrote that we should concentrate on what is in front of us with genuine seriousness. For caregivers, this is more than advice — it is a daily practice. Meaning rarely arrives as a grand revelation. More often, it shows up in small acts: arranging flowers a parent can see from the bed, remembering how someone takes their tea, being present without an agenda. Philosophy gives us permission to take those small acts seriously.

When we begin to notice the depth in ordinary moments, caregiving can shift from a list of tasks to a way of being with another person. The work is still hard. The difference is that we recognize what we are doing.

Discussion Questions

1. What is one small caregiving moment from this past week that felt meaningful, even if you didn't have words for it at the time?
2. The philosopher Simone Weil said that attention is the rarest and purest form of generosity. How does that idea sit with you?
3. Is meaning something we find, or something we make?

TRY THIS WEEK

At the end of one day this week, write down three small caregiving moments — nothing big, just things you noticed. A facial expression, a shared laugh, a quiet pause. Don't analyze them. Just name them. Notice how the act of naming changes what you remember.

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