10 TED Talks Every Senior Caregiver Should Watch

by GARY SIMMONS

Inspiration for Alzheimer's Caregivers

Caring for the elderly can sometimes be challenging. The challenges you may face as a caregiver are often diverse and sometimes overwhelming. However, caregiving is also very rewarding, and much inspiration for Alzheimer's caregivers can be found.

Therefore, finding the inspiration to help face these challenges is important. Luckily, TED Talks offer presentations on numerous topics that can help you develop clever ideas and positive attitudes when dealing with emotionally taxing situations as a caregiver.

Here is a list of the 10 best TED Talks that every caregiver should watch:

1. Older People are Happier: By Laura Carstensen

This is an informative video about why seniors are happier than any other age group. Although the term happy, by definition, is somewhat subjective, studies have shown that older people are generally more content and positive. The ability to be content and positive in old age is a byproduct of wisdom, something many members of the younger generation lack.

2. Asking for Help Is a Strength, Not a Weakness: By Michelle L. Sullivan

Dealing with an aging parent or friend presents obvious challenges. However, there are also many challenges some seniors experience that we cannot see.

Michelle Sullivan explains how we can give of ourselves to help others. She explains that even though we are not necessarily old ourselves, we all need the help of others in some way. People must work together to create support systems, and that is ultimately what caregiving is all about.

3. What You Can Do to Prevent Alzheimer’s: By Lisa Genova

As the years go on, more people are at risk of developing Alzheimer’s disease. In the next 30 to 40 years, one of every two individuals is likely to develop the disease. Since so many caregivers, both personal and professional, will likely experience Alzheimer’s first hand at some point in their lives, understanding the disease is essential.

4. Prepare for a Good End of Life: By Judy MacDonald Johnston

In this presentation, Judy MacDonald Johnston outlines five suggestions that could help caregivers understand and deal with a senior’s inevitable last days. It is possible for aging individuals to maintain a high-quality lifestyle until the day they die, as long as proper procedures are in place. This provides the elderly reassurance that their

last days will be comfortable, and sometimes that mindset makes all the difference.

5. Am I Dying?: By Mathew O’Reilly

Spend enough time caring for the elderly and eventually you will have to answer the question, “Am I dying?” What’s the best way to respond? Mathew O’Reilly has some insight into that question that every caregiver should hear.

6. Life’s Third Act: By Jane Fonda

In "Life’s Third Act," Jane Fonda explains how an individual can make the most out of their lives during the last 30 years. She explains how even as physical health declines, your spirit can always climb. This is not a supernatural spirit she talks about here. Rather, it’s the emotional spirit: the will to survive and even thrive.

As caretakers, we can help renew the meaning and significance of people’s lives, regardless of age. How we respond to seniors as caretakers can help them determine the quality of their lives.

7. What Really Matters at the End of Life: By B.J. Miller

In "What Really Matters at the End of Life," B.J. Miller shares how caregivers can provide care and emotional sustenance on many various levels. He understands caregiving as patient or human centered, rather than disease centered.

According to Miller, caregiving should be creative, generous, and even playful to help comfort the mind, body and soul. This is a must watch for any prospective caregiver.

8. The Power of Vulnerability: By Brene Brown

Brene Brown explains how vulnerability is essential for intimate human connections. This applies to most interpersonal relationships. Those between wife and husband depend on vulnerability, but those might be obvious examples.

The bond between caregiver and care receiver also depends on vulnerability. Since a person needing care may feel they are unworthy of a caregiver’s friendship, caregivers have a responsibility to reduce this feeling. Showing yourself as emotionally vulnerable will do just that.

9. We Need a Heroic Narrative for Death: By Amanda Bennett

This presentation is about hope, not hope of an everlasting life, but instead the hope for a happy ending. It’s about maintaining positive outlooks on life, regardless of the adverse events that usher in death. Amanda Bennett helps us realize that death is not only a concern for the aging, but also concerns the friends and families of the old and ill.

10. Let’s Talk About Dying: By Peter Saul

Intensive care doctor Peter Saul muses on how we talk about death. He explains how many individuals, patients and families ignore the issue of death until the inevitable day is upon them.

Since maintaining a positive attitude in old age is essential for keeping the quality of life high, it matters how we die. Without sharing an open dialog about death and dying, we deprive ourselves of the chance for a quality, dignified death.

Conclusion

Although some of these ideas might not be applicable to everyone, they should offer inspiration for Alzheimer's caregivers. These talks are a great start for helping caregivers make the most of the precious moments of a senior’s life, and provide wonderful, memorable experiences for seniors, their families and their caregivers.

Caregiving is maintaining and improving people’s lives. Whether those people are just getting older or reaching the ends of their lives makes no difference. A caregiver is there to help maintain the best quality of life for the person possible at the time.

Senior citizens might be more content than many, but they still need assistance and reassurance. Nothing is worse for a senior than feeling they are a burden to their friends or family. Caregiving is rewarding because it helps relieve that burden, giving seniors an opportunity to maintain the quality of life they deserve.