

Chicken Soup for the Caregiver's Soul: Stories to Inspire Caregivers in the Home, the Community and the World (Chicken Soup for the Soul)

By Jack Canfield, Mark Victor Hansen, LeAnn Thieman L.P.N.

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A dose of inspiration for caregiving professionals and the millions of souls who help care for family and friends

Over 54 million people in America help care for ailing or recovering family members and friends and millions more give of themselves to others through day care, eldercare, emergency and community service.

While rewarding, care giving requires tremendous emotional, physical and spiritual stamina. *Chicken Soup for the Caregiver's Soul* offers a respite to those who give care through inspiring and uplifting stories about the work they do and its power to transform lives.

Through awe-inspiring glimpses of real-life experiences of others, readers will find the motivation to overcome a challenging day, welcome recognition for their selfless contributions, and the encouragement to continue making a positive difference in others' lives.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Jack Canfield is the #1 New York Times and USA Today best-selling author of the Chicken Soup for the Soul series. He is a professional speaker who has dedicated his lives to enhancing the personal and professional development of others.

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LeAnn Thieman, L.P.N., has been a nurse for thirty-two years. She is a professional speaker and the coauthor of Chicken Soup for the Nurse's Soul.

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The Magic of Making a Difference

To cultivate kindness is a valuable part of the business of life.
Samuel Johnson

We were all looking forward to Easter. Charlie had run to get last-minute candy for the Easter baskets. Finishing breakfast, both of our children were running and laughing through the living room. Suddenly, Ken, our eight-year-old, burst into the den, where I was on the phone.

Steph is acting really funny, he said.

Yes, I know. I hear you laughing.

No, he insisted, There's something wrong.

I hung up the phone and walked quickly into the bedroom where five-year-old Stephanie was lying on the floor, unconscious, with a small amount of foam in the corners of her mouth. Unable to wake her, I told Ken to call 911 and I, nurse-mom, quickly assessed her condition. Though breathing with a steady pulse, her color was gray.

The ambulance arrived and took her to Children's Hospital. Shortly after entering the emergency room, she had a seizure. Within minutes, she stopped breathing. As the staff feverishly worked on her, my husband, Charlie, arrived. We stood together, looking through the emergency room windows, not believing what was happening.

The doctor pulled us aside and told us he had no explanation for Stephanie's condition but was very concerned because her status had changed so quickly. After routine questions regarding overall health status, history and access to poisons, they transported Stephanie for a CAT scan. We were left to pray. In a state of shock, I could not believe how rapidly our lives had been turned upside down.

An hour ago, we were eagerly looking forward to Easter, and now our world was crumbling around us.

With no remarkable results from the CAT scan, Stephanie was taken to the intensive care unit, where she was placed on a ventilator, in a coma. They called in expert after expert. Each ran tests and then let us know they didn't know what was happening. While I hoped and prayed for answers, I was also relieved as they ruled out one serious explanation at a time. I knew that in spite of the uncertainties, no diagnosis was good news.

We took turns at her bedside, making sure that someone was there at all times. After six days, there was no improvement. The doctors informed us that they believed she had viral encephalitis, and there was little they could do except provide supportive care. They also cautioned us that children with encephalitis often do not make a full recovery. If she did get better, we should brace ourselves for a child with severe disabilities. We were very discouraged yet hopeful for a miracle.

Later that evening, Stephanie began to move her feet and hands. By the following morning, she was breathing on her own, and the nurses detached the respirator. As I was washing her face, she suddenly put her arm around my neck and said my name. I thought I was dreaming and just stood there and stared.

From that day on, Stephanie showed steady improvement. With great courage, she approached her recovery with energy and humor. She never complained or asked Why me? She simply would ask, What's next?

We met with a series of rehabilitation specialists, who outlined a program for her to regain her strength and her skills. After a day at physical therapy, where many of the kids were coughing and sneezing, we decided it would be better to rehabilitate her at home. Both Charlie and I took a leave from work, and my mother came to help. We helped Stephanie re-learn how to walk, feed herself, ride her bike and read. We stayed focused on small improvements and watched slow, steady progress.

After six months of daily care, we decided to take a break and go to Disney World. Planning the trip gave Stephanie a new focus and seemed to accelerate her progress. After careful coordination with her doctor, we were off for a week of fun and relaxation.

From the moment she entered the Magic Kingdom in a stroller, she was fascinated by a rocket-ship ride on top of a building. The faster the ride went around, the higher the rockets flew. She begged to take a spin, but the line was long, and in the heat, we knew we'd have to pace ourselves. Instead, we went on the Teacups. What a mistake! It seems like someone was always getting sick on the Teacups. Then we tried It's A Small World After All. We didn't know that once you heard that tune, you could never get it out of your head.

All Stephanie wanted was to ride that rocket ship, but we knew she couldn't tolerate waiting up to an hour in such heat. Finally, on the last day, right about closing, we saw that the line had all but disappeared. We ran over to the gate only to have a smiling attendant pull the chain across saying, That's all for today. You come back and see Mickey tomorrow.

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