

A sunset over a body of water with ripples. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm orange and yellow glow. The water is dark blue with small, dark rocks or pebbles visible. A white vertical line runs down the center of the image.

# Compassionate Care

**PERSONALIZED SUPPORT FOR YOUR LOVED ONES  
A GUIDEBOOK FOR EFFECTIVE AGING-IN-PLACE**

**By Dr. Arlene Binoya-Strugar, PsyD**



## Written by Dr Arlene Strugar, Director, Wellbeing Health Specialists

Why hire just one person to help at home when you can have an entire professional team at your service? From care planners, to schedulers, to multiple aides, we are all here to make sure your home care service is competent and dependable. This includes automatic fill-ins when your normal aide is on vacation or out sick. Our service also means you will have help supervising your aide's quality of work and that we will provide continuing education for your aide. Professionalism is a hallmark of our service. Our aides complete extensive training programs covering many of the issues that affect health and safety in retirement: fall safety, nutrition, infection control, etc. Each of our aides has passed thorough background checks and reference checks. We also provide ongoing, formal and informal training for aides throughout the year, every year. With our home care service, you can be assured that everyone working for you is a true professional. More information about Wellbeing Health Specialists is provided at the end of this guidebook.

COMPASSIONATE CARE: PERSONALIZED SUPPORT FOR YOUR LOVED ONES

Compassionate Care Guidebook

By Dr. Arlene Binoya-Strugar, PsyD





Medication is the other place where calm professionalism pays off quickly. Older adults often manage many medicines on complex schedules. A steady, attentive presence to track what is taken and how a body responds — that presence prevents most of the avoidable crises I have seen.

#### COMPANIONSHIP IS NOT A LUXURY

Loneliness is one of the most underestimated risks in elderly care. Decades of research, and decades of my own clinical experience, all say the same thing: isolation hurts the brain, the body, and the spirit.

Companionship is not extra. It is medicine. A familiar voice in the room. A shared cup of tea. Someone who remembers what your loved one cared about before the illness, and asks about it gently. A walk to the corner. A word game played slowly. Music from the year they were married.



For a person with Alzheimer's, cognitive engagement remains possible long after most other things become hard. The activities don't need to be elaborate. What matters is the quality of attention. The other person being there fully — present, unhurried, kind.

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When I see a family find someone who can be that presence in the home, even a few hours a week, I see the whole household begin to breathe again. That is not a small thing. That is the whole game.

#### A WORD FOR THE FAMILY CAREGIVER

I want to talk to you, the person  
carrying this. I see you.



What you are doing is hard. It is physically demanding, emotionally complex, and most of it is invisible to everyone outside your home. You may be grieving the person your loved one used to be while caring for who they are now. You may feel guilty when you are not with them, and depleted when you are. You may have set aside your own needs so consistently that you have almost forgotten what they are.

This is not sustainable. And it is not what your loved one would want for you, either.

Respite care exists for exactly this reason. When a trained aide steps in, even for a few hours a week, it gives you time to rest, to attend to your own health, to be present in your other relationships, to remember who you are when you are not also someone's caregiver. That time is not selfish. It is what makes long-term caregiving possible.



I have watched too many family caregivers wait until they were in crisis before asking for help. Please do not be one of them. The earlier you build support around yourself, the more of yourself you will have to give to the person you love.

## THE LAST SEASON

This is the most tender chapter, and I want to approach it gently.

End-of-life care is about more than managing symptoms. It is about ensuring that your loved one's final days reflect who they are — their values, their wishes, their relationships. It is about comfort. It is about dignity. It is about presence.

The conversations about palliative care, pain management, and treatment preferences are difficult. They are also acts of love. They ensure decisions are made with calm and intention, not in the fog of a crisis at two in the morning.

In the last season, what your loved one needs most is not heroic intervention. It is a hand to hold, a familiar voice nearby, a room that feels safe, the family they love around them when it is time. Care, in this season, becomes less about doing and more about being.

And after — supporting families through grief is part of compassionate care, too. You do not have to carry it alone.

### BUILDING A CARE PLAN THAT LIVES AND CHANGES

No care plan is written once and left alone. Your loved one's needs will evolve. The plan must evolve with them.



Start with an honest assessment — physical, emotional, cognitive, social. Involve your loved one as much as they can engage. Their preferences matter. Their voice matters, even when it is harder to hear. Then build a plan that addresses daily living, health monitoring, social engagement, and safety — and review it regularly. Every season. Every change.

The goal, always, is to support your loved one in living as fully and comfortably as possible, in their own home, surrounded by familiarity, cared for by people who know them and respect them.

If anything in this short book has landed with you, please act on it. Have the conversation you have been avoiding. Make the small change in the home. Reach out for the help. And take care of yourself, too. You are part of the care plan.



# Compassionate Care

Compassionate Care: Personalized Support for Your Loved Ones offers invaluable guidance for families caring for aging loved ones or those living with dementia and Alzheimer's. Dr. Arlene Binoya-Strugar emphasizes the importance of personalized connections, familiar environments, and the delicate balance of support that honors the dignity of the individual. This essential resource encourages caregivers to seek help early, ensuring their loved ones can live meaningfully and comfortably in their own homes.





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