

Daughterhood the Podcast Ep #47

Acceptance and Presence In Caregiving

with Sue Ryan

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• 57:03

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Rosanne 01:05

Hello, and welcome to Daughterhood the Podcast. I am your host Rosanne Corcoran Daughterhood circle leader and primary caregiver. Daughterhood is the creation of Anne Tumlinson who has worked on the front lines in the healthcare field for many years and has seen the multitude of challenges caregivers face. Our mission is to support and build confidence in women who are managing their parents care. Daughterhood is what happens when we put our lives on hold to take care of our parents. We recognize this care is too much for one person to handle alone. We want to help you see your efforts are not only good enough, they're actually heroic. Our podcast goal is to bring you some insight into navigating the healthcare system provide resources for you as a caregiver as well as for you as a person and help you know that you don't have to endure this on your own. Join me in Daughterhood. Sue Ryan has been in rolls of family caregiving for more than 40 years. Her mission is to empower individuals to maximize and accept the potential opportunities that change will bring. As Sue shares, We're continuously in transitions, the process of going from where we are to what's next in our lives. Whether we're choosing the change or the change is happening to us intentionally navigating transitions in each area of our life means changing from ending up somewhere we may not want to be to waking up feeling confident and secure, knowing what we want and how to achieve it. She shares what she has learned through her speaking, coaching, writing and her TED Talk. In this episode, we discussed many transitions in the caregiver journey, recognizing what is giving ourselves permission, how to access our strengths, how our unconscious thoughts add to our patterns, and how massive acceptance and radical presence are the keys to ultimate freedom. I hope you enjoy our conversation.

How can massive acceptance and radical presence assist caregivers throughout their entire journey of caregiving?

Sue Ryan 03:03

Thank you. Roseanne for asking that question. It is a powerful question. Because it helps us with ourselves and it helps us with everything else. Would you like me to start with a definition of massive acceptance and radical presence to kind of

Rosanne 03:19

certainly can? You certainly can.

Sue Ryan 03:22

I, I had massive acceptance and radical presence revealed to me in a caregiving experience with my dad, my hero who had the type of dementia, and I knew I was being present to him. I knew he had dementia, he I I had had several roles of dementia care before him. And we were in a kind of a challenging situation. He had all of a sudden stood up outside and said walk the dog and headed toward a Lanai door that would go down a really sloping grassy hill on this Bermuda grass we have down in Florida that's very rough. And I thought that wasn't safe. Yet the Lanai we were sitting on had a door on the other side that went out to a very safe smoothly paved path. And so I was trying to encourage him to take the safe path. And yet he wanted to go the other way to the other path. And so he resisted and, uh, we struggled i He finally went that way. And I was frustrated. He was frustrated, everything was really frustrating. And I you know, we were all safe. But later I was reflecting on that experience when I realized that I had really let my dad down. Because while I had accepted, he had a type of dementia. I hadn't completely massively accepted it. Because if I had, I would have recognized he was doing all he had access to. And I was present to the fact that he wanted to walk the dog and that he was struggling. But how was it just radically 100% focused on him. I was still thinking in the past of things that he had taught me about being safe and making the wisest choice and all those things. And so am I learning from that experience? was massive acceptance and radical presence, which I now apply in every area of my life, and it's changed the trajectory of my other caregiving roles, the one that continued with my dad until he passed, and the one that's ongoing with my husband. And here's what massive acceptance is, it is accepting exactly what is accepting it 100%. without judgment, which is huge, we're not judging it, whether we like it or not, we're just this is where the observer, this is what it is, we don't have to like it. We don't have to agree with it, we don't have to understand it. There may be times when we have things that we never understand, or we may understand it at another time. But we just have to absolutely massively accept this is what is. And then when we do, we're able to stay radically Present 100% Present in this moment, which is, by the way, all we really have. So focus on exactly what is we're not fortune telling the future, we're not looking into the past and bringing it forward. And again, we're not judging it. It's great in any phase of our of our lives and our caregiving journeys. In the beginning, when all of a sudden there's a diagnosis, or when you have that recognition that that a diagnosis is about to come, you're seeing signs of something in the future. Massive acceptance and radical presence mean that, okay, we accept that this is what is going to be part of our lives now. This is what it is, let's see what's in this moment, what is there here for us to do, and especially when we all of a sudden have this diagnosis, and it's so overwhelming with so many different things, when we're fully present, we can tell from ourselves, if there are things that we know, we're not going to be able to

do that we're not qualified, or we're not going to going to be physically able to do. And it helps to give us permission to seek help something that's so valuable in our caregiving journeys. And especially in the beginning, when we don't know what to do or where to go, understanding what we can and we can do and where we want to get support are going to be really, really helpful. And then accepting it instead of fighting, it means that we're not going to pretend it's not going to happen. If we haven't gotten the diagnosis yet, we're going to be able to start making decisions that that let our pathway be a much smoother pathway. So that's the beginning kind of place of with massive acceptance and radical presence.

Rosanne 07:22

Well, and it's, it's hard, because if you don't want to see it, or if you're disoriented, because let's be honest, a lot of times caregiving, it just happens. It's a phone call, it's a fall, it's something and then all of a sudden, you're looking at the situation, you're like, Well, my life, my entire life just changed. And what am I supposed to do now? How am I supposed to figure all of this out? While I'm, I'm be I've been thrown into this role of Oh, my God. And you know, there's so many things that come with that. So how do you then look at look at this, isn't it in that manner of being like, Okay, this is where I'm at? This is great. You know how some people need a little time to get to that point? You don't, you really don't have that and caregiving. And the longer that you push that away, the harder it makes being in that present moment. So how can you get to that? Okay, you know, what this is where this is where I am, this is what we're doing. Because while you're planning for the future, which you try, and you can't see into the future, you don't know what's going to happen, but you have to have some sort of a plan to go forward. But yet, you have to stay right here. So how do you balance that? With this?

Sue Ryan 08:38

That's such a great question. One of the things that's so important, especially in the beginning of the caregiving journey, and we'll talk about the other parts, as well, but sure, especially in the very beginning of the caregiving journey, when you either see that you're going to be a caregiver, it's kind of on the horizon, or, like you said, in the blink of an eye, there is an event. And this could be of whether it's with a child, or whether it's with a spouse, whether it's with a parent, whoever it is, I mean, this is all ages, all types of diagnoses. And yet what's what's coming or what all of a sudden, is, you immediately want the PhD in the diagnosis, and you want a PhD and caregiving and caregiving, when you look it up, it's helping people with, you know, activities of daily living kind of thing, and it's like, what are those? It's everything, it's just massive umbrella. And things just keep getting put in and put in put in a massive acceptance says, Okay, this is what is when you accept it, you're able to look at it exactly that it is, this is what it is. You're not judging it. So you're not taking a lot of emotion. You're not bringing things other people's journeys into it. You're not being fearful of what's happening. You're saying okay, this is exactly what it is now, recognizing this as what is what do I need to do now? And it's easier to make A list of things to say, This is what's coming up for me, I don't know what it is, I don't know. So one of the things that I'm going to be needing to learn is the diagnosis and caregiving, so staying radically present, you're giving yourself permission to recognize, there's no way I can do all of this on my own. And you recognize from the very beginning, it's okay to ask for help. It's okay to find people to help you on the journey. And it's okay not to feel like you're supposed to be all things as a caregiver. And that's a great way to begin your journey. Because you're looking at it more objectively, you're looking at it as the observer, not the judge of it.

Rosanne 10:45

Right? You know, the challenge that comes with that is when you're asking for help, or when you're looking when you're surveying your, your people around you, who you can ask who you can access, and what comes back is either judgment or not, I can't help you, or I can help you, but it's not what you need. It's hard then to regroup. Just to keep trying in that vein, do you know what I mean? It's not that it's not that easy. When you don't have those people around you, when you don't have access to help. It's not we can't we can't just wave a magic wand. And all of a sudden, all these people show up to help, because they come with their own baggage as well. And you have to train them. And you have to walk them through everything. You can get the help in those, you know, outside areas, can you go to the store? Can you do that. But when it comes to the actual caregiving, that's what makes it so difficult, is because you're the PhD, you're the one that's gathered all this information. And then you're trying to explain that to the next person that's coming in, while you're sleep deprived and anxious and feeling guilty, and whatever, right? While all of those things are happening at the same time, then you're like, Okay, now I have to explain that. And then that's where the difficulties happen sometimes in that, in that going forward. But we can't know everything. But we need to have the supports to bolster us to be able to continue down this link. And that's, that's the part where it's almost like, we have to give ourselves that permission, yes, to let that to let other people help. And to let down our guards of, I don't have to do all of this myself.

Sue Ryan 12:41

And what you just said is so incredibly powerful. Because the permission part of it. When you're looking more objectively at it, it's like, okay, this is what we're doing. And I'm when I say, looking at it objectively, I'm not talking that you're devoid of emotion, it's true of devoid of judgment of it, you're not judging yourself or others. And when you get started, especially in the journey, we're in any phase of the journey, there are always going to be things we don't understand. One of the things that I put in the program that I created about the caregivers journey, is a phase called The journey begins with me. And one of the greatest gifts we can give ourselves is understanding that each of us is uniquely wired, we have different personality, we have different things that create stress in our lives, we have different ways that we observe things. And when we understand ourselves in a meaningful way, and we review our beliefs, and we review the things that could help us be our own best asset, we recognize where the areas are for us to be able to ask permission. And we also recognize and this is so important, some people are naturally wired to ask permission. And some people are naturally wired or they've had events in their lives that have led them to believe they should not ask for help. It's so important for us to understand those early in our caregiving journey. So they're not getting in our way. And we can do what you're saying is giving ourselves first permission to ask for help. And then also to when we get help, like, like you pointed out, it's not always going to be the right help in the beginning. It's kind of like I use the analogy of a phoropter. When you go get your eyes check, is this better? Or is this better? Or is this you look and you think, Okay, this is what it's going to be like, and they say, Okay, look through it. How is this? Wow, is this better? Or is it so our caregiving journey is a continuous use of the phoropter Is this better? Or is this now if the first time you go and you sit there and then in the optometrist says this veteran you go know, if they go okay, well, I have failed and it's all bad. You'd never and we walking around bumping into each other. So it's it's a perfectly imperfect journey. And recognizing that and

giving ourselves permission not to be able to do everything and not to have all the answers, and to be curious to get the answers is so healthy.

Rosanne 15:09

I love that. I love that. Sorry. Can't see. See you later. Yeah. I love that. That's fantastic. Well, and, and that is, I think part of the really hard challenge in caregiving is that understanding of ourselves, it's that, how do I react? How do I deal with adversity? How do I do any of this in your everyday life? How do I do this? And then you throw caregiving on top, and it's like, Oh, my goodness, it's, every every little thing in your, in your being has been triggered has been set off. And it's hard to think, Well, now, why am I acting like that? Why do I feel this way? Right in the middle of it, it's really hard to do that.

Sue Ryan 15:55

It's very hard to do. And one of the things this is I've studied a lot of different modalities about different things. And I won't go into statistics and stuff. But one of the things that was so enlightening for me in my life overall, and yet, I've been in roles of caregiving support pretty much continuously for the last 40 years. And so I'm able to apply things I learned in what area also into the caregiving and, and I've learned that so much of our thoughts, feelings and actions are actually unconscious. They're things they're programs that are running us, and many of them came from when we were very young, we were developing our beliefs, and we were developing, developing our personalities. And then those become these automatic patterns. So that we're able to function in the day. I mean, if we didn't have them, by the time you got up and got dressed, and you were thinking about, like, how do I brush my teeth? And how do I put my clothes on and all that you'd never get out of the house. So it's not that these are all bad things. It's that they're back there. And we don't reevaluate them. Unlike the insurance policy, where you have two months before your insurance policy renews, they say, Hey, have you ever looked at your policy lately? Has anything changed in your life? Do you want to double check it. And so for us, it's going back and checking these other things. So that when we're put into a situation of stress, we can be aware of the things that in the past, we've learned about how you deal with stress, which may not support us anymore, and when when and then when we're we're pushed, or we're frustrated, and we're facing something that significant, we don't realize that we can just break it down into smaller and smaller manageable parts, we don't have to do all of it on our own. And, and if we feel like someone's gonna judge us not worthy, we can certainly wipe that slate clean, right? There's none of that, you know, we don't need any of those things getting in our way anymore. Because as caregivers, like we don't, we may not go into caregiving having a clue what to do. But we know we want to do our best. We just don't know what that looks like. Right? So don't judge yourself if the outcome isn't what you anticipate when you try it. I would say that more things I've tried as a caregiver didn't work out. I don't know about you, I mean, more things that I tried to do the right way. There were a lot of things that did not work out the way I anticipated

Rosanne 18:07

Well because we don't have a crystal ball. That's the other thing. I'm going to do this, this, this and this, and then this, this, this, and this will happen. And it's like, no. Sorry. Yeah. And that's, that's part of it. But looking at ourselves, it's always the last thing on the list. Because you have 4000 other things on your list and by the time you get to yourself, you're I don't I don't want to think about well, why am I acting like this because I'm exhausted. And I already feel isolated. And I feel like that's gonna make me

more isolated. But there's, there's freedom in that. Also, there's freedom in knowing that things don't, you don't have to continue to do the things you've always done, because you've always done them. You can change.

Sue Ryan 18:57

That's so powerful. But say that again, Rosanne, because that is so incredibly powerful,

Rosanne 19:04

That you don't have to continue to do the things you've done in the way that you've always done them. Because that's how you've always done it. You can you can change at any point in your life. It's a matter of doing. And it's a matter of allowing yourself to do it. And that's hard. It's hard. But it's, it's rewarding when you do.

Sue Ryan 19:23

It's so powerful. And when you're fully present, and you accept yourself the way that you are. You give yourself permission to go okay. And you also recognize it's like you can call yourself out on it and say, you know, hey, I'm not proud of how I just behaved. Let me evaluate like I did with my dad when I was letting him down. And I reflected on it. I honestly reflected on it and I wasn't judging myself. It's like I really wanted to do a good job. And I had a situation with my husband, where he was I'd fixed him a sandwich for lunch and he dropped a potato chip on the floor. And I inside I flipped out and I didn't flip out there. But inside, it's like, Are you kidding me? You dropped a potato chip, you know how hard I've been working, and I fix you and all that. And I, it's like, whoa, and I literally left the room. Wow. And I recognized in myself that I had been doing all these things and just exactly what you were saying, I've been shaving off taking care of myself with this, shaving off this, I'm like, Oh, I can do it later, I can do this, I can do that, like all these things. And that potato chip was the sign to me that I had given up more than I had capacity to give up. And it was an eye opener, my goal and your goal, we don't want anybody else to reach that point. And so when you become self aware, and when you give yourself permission not to be everything that goes under that caregiving umbrella, and not to judge yourself based on what anybody else as a caregiver is doing, then you can figure out, I need help. And when you ask, you may not get the right answer the first time. When you talk to people, though in the caregiving community, they will work with you to I speaking only for myself, I'd love your insight, they will work with us to find the right resource.

Rosanne 21:20

Yes, and, and to give yourself a break. Because this is it's an impossible, it's an impossible situation in a system that is not set up to support anyone, and we're all trying to do the best we can. And that's what you have to you have to go back to at the end of the day. You're trying your best. Yeah. And, you know, it's, it's a very, that's part of why it's so isolating. That's part of why it's so hard. Because then you you're afraid to say something out loud, because then somebody's like, Well, why don't you try this or, or whatever? And then you're like, well, that okay, well, number one, I'm not going to ask you anymore. And number two, I'll just keep it to myself, because I don't, I'm not getting that support. And that's why it's important to find that support, because you can't do this by yourself.

Sue Ryan 22:13

No. And to your point about, you know, just keeping it to yourself. One of the things I found early in my caregiving journey, I had friends now I didn't go to school to be a caregiver. So this was not part of anything I was interested in. It wasn't part of what I thought I wanted to do. I didn't aspire to it, I accepted it, and it keeps coming into my life. And so I know that it's part of my journey. And I accept that. In the beginning, not only was it hard to find information, which is now more readily available. People didn't talk about diagnoses. And so I had friends who also were doing the things that I like, I couldn't ask any of them, and I couldn't really share with them. And then at work, I certainly couldn't tell anybody at work, because they'd say, Well, you know, she's, we can't give her that because she wouldn't be able to do it, because she's caregiving, she doesn't use her, her priorities are split. And so you're struggling with all of these things that are impacting your ability to get the support you need. And and I feel like if there's one message we can get out to people today is that no matter where you are in your caregiving journey, you will never ever have to be alone. You may not know the right resource yet, but it is out there. And you may feel like you can't afford it financially. There are so many different options available today. For people with any kind of financial situation. It's it's like you said, you know, it's it's getting out there and talking, finding people to talk with about it.

Rosanne 23:44

Absolutely. Because they're the true they truly understand and and caregiving is one of those instances where people when they are in it, go wow, I never I never understood what all went into this. I never understood how this felt I didn't because it's you don't think about it. If you're not caregiving, you don't think about it. You're just like, Okay, well, good luck in and you go along your day, how do we change those beliefs that we have, that we've had forever? And not get stuck in that belief? How do we get out of that? You know, well, this is this is how I do this is my belief. This is what I believe this is, you know, how do you get out of that?

Sue Ryan 24:23

Oh, I am so glad you asked that question. Because that is also one of the things that I studied. And it's so fascinating. We came into our world unconscionably curious. And originally it was for our safety and our survival because we didn't have all kinds of the wonderful amenities we have today. And so this beautiful, amazing unquenchable curiosity and we you know, we've all been young children, we've been around young children, asking questions, asking questions, they don't have boundaries, they're, they're looking. So when we get started in our caregiving roles, is that same kind of a thing is Being unconscionably curious. And asking questions and not settling for an answer. If it doesn't seem quite right is continuing to ask continuing to learn. And what I learned about our beliefs is that many of our beliefs are outdated. And we haven't changed them. And actually, if you want to, I don't know, if you've got show notes or whatever, I've got a guide, I do both. And we can put it in there and they can get it. But I like do you believe your beliefs really? And I'll give you a quick example. Yeah. When you were a child, did your parents say look both ways before you cross the street?

Rosanne 25:40

Sure.

Sue Ryan 25:41

Did they tell you that once?

Rosanne 25:43

Probably not. That they tell you that 1000s of times, yeah, probably a dozen times over and over again. And now today? Is it really valuable if you look both ways before you cross the street? Sure. So that was something done out of love and safety. And it's still very valid in our lives. Okay, here's another one. Don't talk to strangers. When we're children, because we haven't learned discernment yet. Our parents over and over again, they just chunk it up. Don't talk to strangers, right? Because we don't know yet. How to discern if it's a good guy or bad guy. Don't talk to strangers. All right. So we grow up as powerfully as the look both ways before you cross the street is the don't talk to strangers. So those are both beliefs that were developed in us at a very early age. But we don't consciously go back and revisit them and say, Does it still work for me? So now, it's as simple as going you know what, that was something that was done out of love and safety years ago, but I can now discern if it's if it's okay to talk to a stranger or not. So as we're going through wince when we bump into something in our caregiving journey, that doesn't seem quite right to us, it's a great opportunity for us to be curious and say, Hey, where's that coming from? Is that something that serves me? Or is that something I want to come up with a new way of believing a new way of thinking about? And if I'm not sure, let me have a conversation with somebody so that our beliefs support us, as we're moving forward, make it easier,

Rosanne 27:18

Right. No, and, and I see this a lot in our Circles, in talking with other people and sharing, because a lot of times, it's like, you don't talk about what happens in your life or in your house outside of that area. And again, and I want the the word that keeps coming to me is freedom. All of this is freedom. Because when you do when you do take that chance, because it feels like you're taking a chance, because you're going against everything that you've been brought up to think about, you know, you can handle it yourself. You can take care of it yourself. What do you what do you need help with that for whatever, whatever, insert whatever here, when you do say something like that, and someone else says, I thought it was just me. That's freedom. Yes. Right. I thought I was the only one that thought that I could never say this to my dot, dot dot. But you can say it to another caregiver. It's so powerful. Yeah. You know, you can say it to somebody who truly understands and isn't going to judge you. You're there's no judgment.

Sue Ryan 28:26

That's a huge part of it. The no judgement. It's amazing. And I we've brought it up several times here no judgment. Well, I tell you, what, if you if you did the little circle with the red slash through for the word judgment, yeah. Such a powerful thing to in the caregiving journey, no judgment of yourself or others. And if somebody you know, is talking about their version of the journey and saying, This is a horrible thing, it's a dreadful disease. It's just awful and awful. They can judge it the way they want. And yet what I have learned is, okay, there's a diagnosis, and that it is what it is, I can't change the diagnosis. I can't control my perspective, my behavior, my feelings, my actions, I all I can control is me. And so there's a diagnosis. I accept that there's a diagnosis. Now, what do we do? And if we are looking from a place of judgment, we're looking at things and this is a very powerful part about judgment. Judgment is based on what we already know. And it's based on our past. And we have an opinion, we have an emotion associated with an experience. And now we're judging something. So we're not looking at something the way it actually is. We're looking at it based on how we've judged it based on the past.

And yet if we come into it, not as the judge but the observer, and we're unconsciously curious, we can say what is there here? I may not understand it. Let's explore it. Let's see what is here in this moment. And I'll give you an example with my husband He we're in our 11th year with his journey of, of the Alzheimer's disease, diagnosis of income within dementia. And there are people who would look at him and say he's in the I'm using air quotes, late stages of Alzheimer's disease. And yet, I never use that. I go in every day when I see him, and I observe him exactly where he is today. What does he have access to what he does? Does he not have access to how comfortable he is he? It's not about where he was, you know, other than making sure that he is physically my two rules for everybody safe and happy. What are we doing to ensure that he's safe and as comfortable as possible? If I was looking at him through the lens of what people had categorized as phases of the diagnosis, and I know what they are, we've studied and things like that. Sure. But I don't want to try to put him into that. judging it. Because I can make things fit there. And then what, right, I observe him and if he has access to being able to smile, I celebrate that. And today's a day when he doesn't make sure he's physically safe. And he's okay. And then I just accept the fact that today's not a day when he has asked us to smile.

Rosanne 31:19

And that's okay. Okay, that's the part. That's okay. What Works is okay. Because otherwise you miss it, you're missing it and that's, that's that dichotomy of caregiving. We're so focused on this, doing, doing doing doing, and then there's still a person here, there's still a relationship that you have here. And you, you're, you're gonna miss that. It's hard. It's a challenge, but you have to live in that and space.

Sue Ryan 31:52

So powerful.

Rosanne 31:53

This is happening.

Sue Ryan 31:54

Yes.

Rosanne 31:54

Okay. Like, this is really hard. This is really hard. It's I don't know how how to do this, and, or saying, this is really, you know, I adore my person, I love my person, or even just, you know, like my person. And this is really hard. But you can live in those, you have to live in that and it's got to be both.

Sue Ryan 32:16

I love the way you said that. Rosanne, because it's really both. It's the being and the doing, it's the both. It's not an either, or, you can't, you know, let me ask you, you I perceive you can't have one without the other.

Rosanne 32:33

Correct Absolutely. I mean, absolutely. I I. And I would say I adore my mother and this is the hardest thing I've ever done in my life. I don't know how I'm gonna survive this. They're both true. And in staying

in that, again, it gives you that it gives you that permission, it's no judgment, you're allowed to say that you're allowed to say it. Because that frees you to be able to do what you need to do.

Sue Ryan 33:01

It does. And I will add something to that, based on what you just talked about, is an not everybody is going to be in sync with what I say. And I've recognized that I've had conversations, and there are people who push back against this. Sure. And I recognize that and I accept it. It's that I believe that every experience, and every emotion is for us. It's not happening to us. If the emotions weren't important in our lives, if they didn't have value, whether it's joy, or grief, or anger, or happiness, whatever emotion there is, if there wasn't a purpose, for that emotion for us, in our lives, to teach us about ourselves, then that emotion would not exist and the experiences that we have, I have learned so much about who I am as a person from experiences that have been phenomenally challenging. Because I learned where I had resilience. And I learned where I did not have capacity. And I developed resilience, and I sought support. And I learned the areas where I resisted getting support and reflected in what does that teach me about myself so that I can become a better person and in our caregiving journey. It's like most of these are heightened for us that when we're going through our day in and day out life, many, many times they're there, they're kind of there, but there's more of an existence of it. There aren't the extremes of volatility. And yet in our caregiving journey, in any day, we can have the highest of highs and the lowest lows, and we can have a multiple times you know, whatever. And so I really feel like being open to the consideration of them being for us because their lessons for us, as well as the journey that we're on with our care receiver.

Rosanne 34:50

Absolutely. If you nobody comes through being a caregiver as the same person when they started. You just can't. I almost feel like any way weakness that you had is now turned into a strength. Because you are able to identify it, you're able to look at it, you may not be able to look at it in those moments. But when you're past those moments, you certainly can go, oh, that's what that was, and learn from it. And in in these instances, what would you say is the best way to be able to adapt to this or change? Or, you know, soften the edges or whatever, in this instance?

Sue Ryan 35:29

Sure. One of the things that I have people become aware of, is the fact that we are always at choice. And there are times when we feel like we're not at choice. And when we get stuck, yeah. And when we feel we're not at choice, it's because we're reflecting based on what we already know. And I asked people a series of questions, I have them ask themselves, you know, what else is possible? One of the other things that happens, especially when our loved one has passed, and it actually happens in the journey, as well as it because we're grieving all the way through our journey, we're grieving the loss of a little thing, like being able to go out to lunch together, we're grieving, you know, they're, they're larger and smaller. We used to go out as a couple and now but nobody invites itself, you know, things like that. Okay. So there are different things that where we where we have moments of grief. And yet, one of the things that happens is we apply the incorrect emotion to the experience. So we get stuck. And I'll give you an example of that.

Rosanne 36:37

Wow, that's great. Okay.

Sue Ryan 36:38

Yes. I'll practice with you.

Rosanne 36:42

Okay.

Sue Ryan 36:43

I say to you, Rosanne. I was just diagnosed with cancer. What would you say?

Rosanne 36:49

I'm very sorry. I'm sorry. Sorry.

Sue Ryan 36:51

Okay. Why would you say I'm sorry?

Rosanne 36:54

Because of everything that goes with that. I, I see, I would think you must be frightened, you must be in a panic. I go to that next, aside from the Oh, my goodness, now you have to get, you know, I don't know, if you were just diagnosed, and you have to the appointments that are coming up and the trying to navigate that whole system, and everything that lays before you in the health care system. And PS your life if you know your children, your husband, your dog, whatever, like everything, because that's where your mind goes, What's going to happen to my dot dot dot....

Sue Ryan 37:33

Perfect. Perfect. Okay. Let me ask you this. What part of my cancer diagnosis were you responsible for?

Rosanne 37:42

None of it.

Sue Ryan 37:43

Okay, why are you apologizing?

Rosanne 37:46

It's a great question.

Sue Ryan 37:47

All right. When we're very young, very, very young. We're taught to apologize. And we often don't know what we're apologizing for when something goes wrong, Sam, sorry. Apologize, right. We get in our mind and we hear other people say, I'm sorry. I'm sorry. i So what it is, is an apology. Now. Here's what actually happens, though. I tell you, I've been diagnosed with cancer. So on my side, I've said something. You said something you've said I'm sorry. So checkbox off. You've you said something. And

I said, Okay, what does I'm sorry, actually do? It doesn't help anything. Now what you told me when I was giving, asking you for the explanation what's behind it? You were saying all the right things? Yeah. So what would have been a more valuable thing? As I say, I was just diagnosed with cancer. And you say, Wow, this may be a frightening time for you? What could I be doing to support you? Could I help take out the dog? Could I go to the grocery store for you? So you actually engage in dialogue, and you can help in their emotions? Do you see what I'm saying?

Rosanne 38:52

I totally do. Yeah, that's beautiful.

Sue Ryan 38:55

One of the things that happened now, I'll give you the other one we will do we don't have time to go through the example. But if you think that's a good one, yeah, you another word we use where we apply the wrong emotion. And you can't have the correct relationship with something and process it correctly for you. If you're not using the right emotion. And another one is, let me ask you this. Have you ever said Oh, I feel so guilty?

Rosanne 39:20

Me? Yeah. Oh, Gosh, I wonder what I would do with my day if I didn't feel guilty about something. Sure.

Sue Ryan 39:25

Okay. I asked people to look up the definition of words. I'm big on having the definition of words and having similar understanding. If you looked up the definition of guilty, you would stop using it. No doubt. It is though. It's something that we were taught to feel guilty, or we were told we were guilty. And we just picked it up and we've carried it along without evaluating if it's the correct emotion. Guilt means you have done something very bad that is punishable. And so we take on the emotion that's associated with that when if you reflected on the things that you feel guilty, a big one comes in when in our caregiving journey, let's say you call me and say, Hey, Sue, let's go to lunch. And I say, Oh, I'd love to, but I'd feel so guilty, leaving Jack home, I can't do that. I just can't do that to him, right? That's not the right emotion, I'm not processing it correctly, and you're not able to have the right relationship with me, what it would really be is, you asked me, I say, Rosianna, I would love to have lunch with you. I want to make sure that I could figure out you know, I wouldn't feel comfortable if I went to lunch without having Jack cared for. But I would really love for us to share some time together. Let me see if I could figure it out. And perhaps then you could say, Well, hey, I can send my husband over. And the two of them can sit together and talk when we go to lunch. And so you process the experience, you have the right emotion, you're able to. And here's the other thing, this is so important, when we don't use the correct emotion, and we don't process it, it sits out there and it keeps bouncing back up to us periodically. And so if you want to be able to move forward, you want to have the correct emotion for the experience. So you process it, and move forward.

Rosanne 41:09

That's amazing. So how do you do that? Sue, where do we find that chart?

Sue Ryan 41:16

Well, I actually have, I actually do I made I made a worksheet, I'll tell you the easy way of doing it. So without my you know, I just did a very good thing, I would use a sentence. And I would look at it. And I would whenever you like the three words that are keywords that people do this with our guilt, worry, and sorry, totally worry is a wasted emotion that sucks energy out of the universe and adds no value. When ever you use start raising to your level of awareness. Every time you use one of those three words, stop and ask yourself if that is the correct word for that experience, and say, what would I prefer to say? And how would I prefer the extreme? What am I really what am I feeling right now? And explore it? Now the other thing that I do so here's what I do? Have people go out and look at the dictionary, there's a there's a thing called Word hippo, there's the Merriam Webster Dictionary, there are all kinds of dictionaries and thesauruses. So you think about when you when you think about the thing about okay, I was go look at the word, sorry, look it up in the dictionary. And then do like with word hippo or at the source? What are all the other kinds of words? And you go? Is it really any of those words? Or what word does it really what word really is it? And you figure out for yourself what word is? And then when you say Oh, I'm because so many times when people say Oh, I'm so worried about that? Well, they say they're worried about it. And then it's given that space, give it it's given it a space, and then they just move on, they don't do anything about it. So don't park it someplace with I'm worried, right? The other thing is don't enter a period, if you say I'm so worried, and you put a period there and then you move on, take the period out, put a comma, and then take an action item. You know, instead of just being worried about it, here are the three things I'm going to do. So look it up and come up with a word that means for you take away the period, at the end of just saying it Oh, I feel so guilty period, and then you move on, or I'm sorry, period, you move on, replace that with a comma, and then have an action statement or something that you want to do.

Rosanne 43:16

I love that. That might be my favorite thing. I love that.

Sue Ryan 43:20

It's enlightening for people, I must say.

Rosanne 43:23

Well, it is and I think because we're just used to doing doing doing doing and going going going

Rosanne 43:28

And it's unconscious, its unconscious, raising it to your level of awareness. And this is why I say I mean, the statistic is that over 90% of what we do is highly unconscious to us, I'm sorry, is one of those examples. We were taught at a very early age to apologize when something was wrong. And so often we didn't even know what we had done. But our parents looked at us and pointed the finger and said apologize. Right? So something goes wrong. What do you do? Yeah, I'm sorry. And then you check off the list. I apologize.

Rosanne 44:00

Oh, my goodness, that's life changing. I'm gonna have to start like, pulling out my index cards and writing words on them. And then I'm flipside to the other. That's great.

Sue Ryan 44:10

You will never see those three words the same way.

Rosanne 44:13

Mm hmm. Guilt worry and sorry. I love that.

Sue Ryan 44:16

And they're in every part of our life. And then the if you use the word freedom before, yeah, those are so freeing. Yeah. Because you're not weighing yourself down with all of these experiences that you haven't fully processed because you haven't used the right emotion and you haven't taken it where you really wanted to. And then you don't really feel great like you, you know, you say to me, Well, I'm sorry that you were diagnosed with cancer, and then we move on, well, then you haven't really engaged in dialogue and then you're not really sure what to say and you don't want to be uncomfortable. Well, you know, when you go ahead and say, gee, you know, this must be a really challenging time for you and kind of scary probably. What may I do to help? What is there something I could do? Could I walk the dog Could I run to the grocery store for you? You know, I've got two hours on Thursday afternoon, could I come and just, you know, sit with you what you know. And then you start to having an engagement of ways to be related with each other with the experience and the journey. Right? And it's more satisfying.

Rosanne 45:17

Well, it is and again, you can use it across the continuum of caregiving, you can use it across in any situation, because it's almost like you're, you're getting your power back. Because part of this also is that we feel powerless, powerless against the diagnosis, whatever it is, powerless against your entire life changing. There are things that that you really can't control. Not. I mean, listen, we all like to think we can control things in reality.

Sue Ryan 45:52

I can't even control myself.

Rosanne 45:53

Exactly, exactly.

Sue Ryan 45:55

You put chocolate in front of me and it's

Rosanne 45:57

I'm with you. But you know what I mean, we have that level of we were trying to control it

Sue Ryan 46:01

No but what you were saying is applying it in every area. The last phase of what I created in the caregiving journey is called moving forward. Can you talked about this earlier, we're meant to thrive, we're, in order for us to thrive in our lives. Things like guilt, worry, and sorry, hold us back from that. And especially as we're coming through our loved one has passed away. Our caregiving journey has

ended. And it's like, when school ends, you collect your books, and you go home, you know, and when the caregiving journey has ended, it's like, Okay, now, like you said, Who am I? What am I gonna do now. And so for us to be able to go back to knowing and stepping into how we thrive, and it's different than it was before our caregiving journey. And that's not a bad thing. We don't necessarily know where to go and moving forward, we, you know, having permission, and again, the acceptance and presence of who are we now, and not being stuck and saying, Oh, I feel guilty going out and having a good time my husband died, right? Well, yes, he died. And you learn a lot about grief, you learn about a lot about yourself. And the sooner we can get to the place of peace in our heart, the more we can remember the beautiful, beautiful memories we have, and move forward and recreate who we are now meant to be, and really thrive in our lives.

Rosanne 47:22

And all of that is part of massive acceptance, and radical presence, because you have to be where you are. And, you know, I know that sounds like, I'm sure you get this from people like, Well, that's easy to say. But it's true. Because it doesn't matter where you are in your life that's, that's it. That's the foundation,

Sue Ryan 47:43

The only place I get in trouble in my life anymore, is when I go back into judgment, because I know I'm going into back. And it's not that you don't remember things that have gone in your life. There's a pastor Andy Stanley, who I follow, and he's a great communicator in the marketplace, as well as faith based. And, and he told us, he was talking about forgiveness. And he told a story that I have never forgotten because of how powerful it was. And he said, I'm a pastor, I hear stories all the day. And he said, I'm talking about forgiveness. And I've heard stories from people. And I'd be like, I'll give you a pass on forgiveness. And yet he said, these are well adjusted, happy people. And he said, what I've evaluated and learn from them, is so powerful. They use their past, to remind them, not define them. When our past reminds us. That's an observation. When it defines us. It's a judgment, when we practice massive acceptance and radical presence, we're able to use our past to remind us, and yet it doesn't, through judgment prevent us. It doesn't make us use these words that don't you know, guilt, we don't use any of those. We say, Okay, this is something that's going to inform the choices I make. And yet I'm present and I'm making the choices. That feel good to me now. And like you were saying, when you when you're, you know, when you're aware of something that feels right or not, that's where the presence is. It you feel it, and you're aware of it, and you listen to it, because that little nudge, a little nudge is pretty darn smart.

Rosanne 49:18

Absolutely, it can save your life.

Sue Ryan 49:21

That's why we got it.

Rosanne 49:22

That's why we have it. And what happens is we kind of go eh it's indigestion it's alright.

Sue Ryan 49:27

Yeah, I'm busy come back later I don't have time for it now.

Rosanne 49:30

Yeah, I can't do this now. I can't do this now. And and the reality is that you have to do it now. You have to. Yeah, I love that. I love your past is to remind you not define you. I might I might put that on a note card.

Sue Ryan 49:43

It is so freeing, it's so freeing. And it's great on a note card. Because he I mean even today, you know, I'll sometimes it's so easy to step back into that. And then I'll catch myself and this is why I is raising things to our level of awareness so that we are we're not just automatically using these programs that were there, that even if sometimes they're still coming back, well, sometimes we catch ourselves. And the more often we catch ourselves, the more potential we have to change what our beliefs are and the change what we use. And to listen to that little that still small voice, right? That sometimes whacks us over the head.

Rosanne 50:26

Well, yes. And that's, I believe that all of this, it's almost like a, when that thought comes up, you have to say, Oh, hello, you're not welcome here. Almost like the Wizard of Oz, you have no power here. And, but to make that conscious choice of sending it away, but replacing it with something that will support you.

Sue Ryan 50:49

Beautifully said, Yes.

Rosanne 50:50

Does that that?

Sue Ryan 50:52

Yeah, it is. Because you recognize I mean, you know, a lot of times the things that don't serve us anymore served us at some point in time. So you raise it to your level of awareness and say, Thank you, there were years where that was, what was the right thing to do? Right? I don't need this anymore. But be a strong me now about this. So moving forward, we're in a better space.

Rosanne 51:12

Right? Right. And what's the best way to do this? What's the best way to try to because it's, it's, you know, again, you're carrying, you're running, you're stressed, you're in 42 different directions? What's the best way for somebody to try to do this, to try to be present to try to be okay with where you're at, and yet still trying to work forward?

Sue Ryan 51:37

It sounds strange, but it's not. It's as simple as just checking in with yourself. When you do something, just ask yourself, did I really want to do that. And as silly as it sounds, could go back. And remember

the thing about don't talk to strangers, there are unconscious beliefs and patterns of behavior that we just have. And so when you do something, just ask yourself, Is this the way I really want to do it? Or is there something else for me to consider? And especially when you're in a challenging situation, when you get through it, go back and reflect and say, Is there a way? Is there something that created that to be my realities? Is there something that I believed about myself? Is there something I can explore? What could I have done to have had a different outcome? That self reflection without judgment? Is that okay, you know, I accept this as the way that it was? Well, and I love this question. There are two questions, what else is possible? What is here for me to learn? And then the third thing you can do is observe in others, when we observe someone else, and we're not comfortable with something they're doing, reflect in ourselves where we see that in ourselves, because we're seeing it in them, because we we have it in ourselves, or we wouldn't recognize it. And so recognizing that something someone else does is making us uncomfortable. Just check in with yourself and say, is there some place where I'm actually doing that?

Rosanne 53:08

But with no judgment.

Sue Ryan 53:10

Oooo No judgement.

Rosanne 53:11

To look at it as an informational gathering.

Sue Ryan 53:14

It's a gift you're giving yourself a gift. You're giving yourself a gift. Yes, yeah, you're right. Informational gathering.

Rosanne 53:23

Yup. Oh, that's wonderful. I love that. I love all of this. Are there any final thoughts? Or is there anything that you would tell someone, the quickest thing the the easiest thing for them to try to concentrate on? Or think about? In those times have I just, I'm hanging on by a thread?

Sue Ryan 53:45

Sure. There, there's a phrase that I use, that you customize. And then and then there's something else for you to do. So the the phrase that I use, because, you know, partly like what you were talking about earlier, as well, we don't know when the journey is going to end. I mean, I, I'm in the 11th year of our journey with my husband, it could go 5-10 more years, I have no idea. I'm not in control of that. I'm in control of me. And so when I'm exhausted, and when I'm like I say to powerful words, it's reasonable. It's reasonable that you're exhausted. This is a long journey. It's challenging. There are a lot of things that you have chosen in your life to do differently. Because this is your journey. It's reasonable, then, even though I'm exhausted, and I feel like this is a struggle, I love and accept myself. And then the third piece is I will never be alone. On my journey. I'm feeling I'm overwhelmed. And this means to me, it's time for me to find more support. I give myself permission not to feel that I should. Because I don't like that word. I no need to do everything. And then you're open to, it could be just a conversation with

someone. So often all we need to do is just talk to somebody else. Or yet it could be finding a resource. It could be things, there are constantly things that are changing that can be there to support us. We don't have to do this alone. And when we ever feel that just crippling overwhelm, it's a sign to start asking for support from other people and getting insights.

Rosanne 55:51

A big thank you to Sue Ryan for being my guest today. To learn more about Sue her caregivers journey course, TED Talk, free guides and resources, visit her website. SueRyan.solutions I hope you enjoyed our podcast today, head over to Daughterhood.org and click on the podcast section for show notes, including the full transcript and links to any resources and information from today's episode. You can find and review us on Apple podcasts or anywhere you listen to your podcasts. We are also on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, at Daughterhood the Podcast and also at Daughterhood the Podcast.com Feel free to leave me a message and let me know what issues you may be facing. And we'd like to hear more about or even if you just want to say hi, I'd love to hear from you. Also a very special thank you to Susan Rowe for our theme music, the instrumental version of her beautiful song Mamas Eyes from her album Lessons in Love. I hope you found what you were looking for today, information, inspiration or even just a little company. This is Rosanne Corcoran. I hope you'll join me next time in Daughterhood.