

Caregiving and Mental Health

Still Here: A caregiver series

JACQUELYN: Caregiving affected my mental health and the most broad spectrum of emotions and platitudes and highs and lows that one can have.

JESSICA: I'll never forget, like feeling this, this heaviness in my chest, like thinking I was having a heart attack because I was so stressed about what was going on in my mom's life and taking care of her at home. And it was just I was, I was at my wit's end.

JACQUELYN: Like, we all know that everyone has difficulties. But I think when you don't know anyone else that's going through the exact same thing, it can feel like this is the worst thing that could happen to anyone.

BAILEY: I noticed I wasn't sleeping as well. I noticed that I wanted to be alone more. And I do like being alone. But it was, you know, to the point where I didn't really even want to spend time with my daughter. And that's just because I felt like I was giving all of my energy to everyone else.

JESSICA: You have to have a life in order to give to someone else, whether that's nighttime and I'm, you know, catching up on my shows or getting up early in the morning to sit on the porch, I love sitting on the porch, rocking in my little rocking chairs. You hear the birds and the wind and just that is that's my moment. So I can be prepared for the day. All those things allowed me to balance.

BAILEY: You cannot pour from an empty cup and you have to. No one else is going to look out for you like you. You have to.

JACQUELYN: Taking it day by day, taking it minute by minute, taking an inhale, inhale by exhale or breath by breath means to don't think about the future. Think about that moment right then. And that would help to calm me a bit.

BAILEY: I feel like my mental health journey could be a lot smoother. I feel like could be a lot worse. I'm still working through that. I'm still learning how to love myself and how to love even the things I don't like about myself. You know? I feel like it's okay to not like things about yourself or want to change things about yourself, but you still have to accept that that's you and you still have to love yourself despite that.

JESSICA: I owe it to myself to release any sort of guilt or feeling about, you know, whether I did something wrong or failed at being a caregiver today, right. I owe it to myself to get up and like, be me. Right. Because that then allows me to still create joyful moments, to bring positive energy to my mom, to pour into her in ways that she deserves. And so, yeah, I am reclaiming my time and reclaiming my time right now isn't selfish. Reclaiming my time is giving me what I need to show up

best for her because my mom would want me to go do those things and I don't want to have any regrets or resentments at the end of this journey too.