

Daughterhood the Podcast

Episode #78

Caregiver Wellness When You're Already Exhausted With Lauren Fisher

43:06

SPEAKERS

Rosanne Corcoran, Lauren Fisher

Rosanne Corcoran 00:00

Hello and welcome to Daughterhood, the Podcast. I'm your host. Rosanne Corcoran, Daughterhood circle leader and former primary caregiver to my mom, who lived with vascular dementia for 12 years. Through that journey, I experienced every phase of caregiving firsthand, the heartbreak, the joy and the aftermath. That journey showed me how vital support and connection truly are, and that's why this podcast exists. No matter where you are in your caregiving journey. I'm so glad you found us, because caregiving is far too much to do alone. So welcome to Daughterhood, the podcast part of the Daughterhood community, where we empower caregivers to navigate both practical and emotional sides of caregiving together. Here, your efforts aren't just good enough, they're heroic, and here you're never alone. Join me in Daughterhood Before we dive in. I just want to share a quick note. This podcast is part of the Whole Care Network. The conversations you'll hear are here to inform and inspire, but they're not a substitute for professional advice. The views you'll hear are those of the host and guests, and may not always reflect those of the Whole Care Network. If you have medical questions, please talk with your doctor and for legal advice, check in with your attorney. I'm so glad you're here. Lauren Fisher is a certified health coach with her own practice, Lauren Fisher health coaching, where she helps clients build a healthy and whole approach to wellness. Her clients become mindful in all areas of their lives, most importantly, food, exercise and managing stress. Lauren has a BS in broadcast journalism from Ithaca College, and certification from the Institute for Integrative Nutrition, as well as the nutritious Life Community. She's on the board of feast, a national nonprofit that provides support to individuals and families with a vision to provide access to the conditions that create health and wellness for all. I'm currently working with Lauren as a client, and through this process, I've realized if I was practicing these strategies while caring, it could have improved my health during that time and after in this episode, she brings her perspective and compassion to how we can better take care of ourselves while providing care to others. I hope you enjoy our conversation.

Rosanne Corcoran 02:26

Lauren, we hear so many things about taking care of ourselves and the guidance of eating 100 grams of protein a day and increasing fiber and drinking more water and exercising 150 minutes a week, and getting not just enough sleep, but quality sleep and staying socially connected and also finding time to be still and decrease our stress. What in the world are caregivers supposed to do with all of that?

Lauren Fisher 02:48

How about if we just ignore it?

Rosanne Corcoran 02:50

That'd be great. Can we do that?

Lauren Fisher 02:52

Yeah, I feel like that's too much. I would rather think about the frame on progress, not perfection, not trying to do everything, but maybe we can break it down into maybe just four categories, thinking about nutrition, exercise, sleep, stress management and maybe emotional regulation.

Rosanne Corcoran 03:13

Can we start with nutrition? Yeah, I love that's that's always on the top of everybody's mind. Yeah, absolutely. All right, so what's one small shift that can make food feel more supportive on a on a crazy busy caregiving day?

Lauren Fisher 03:28

I would say that the smallest, probably most supportive shift is just letting good enough be good enough. Instead of asking, like, what's the perfect meal? I kind of think the best question to ask is, what would make this moment easier on my body and my nervous system? So this might look like adding protein to whatever you're already eating, so eggs with toast or maybe like Greek yogurt with fruit or soup with some beans, or maybe even chicken. But it's not really about cooking more. It's really just about anchoring the meal so that your blood sugar stays steady and you don't crash later. I mean, caregiving is already demanding, so I just don't feel like food should be another place where anyone feels like they're failing, like, when nourishment? Yeah, when nourishment feels supportive instead of performative, like, people just eat better without trying.

Rosanne Corcoran 04:19

I know it's always about choices. You know, we can make better choices, but sometimes you're just like, I gotta have a soft pretzel, or, you know, something that bag of Doritos is just calling for me. What do you do in those instances?

Lauren Fisher 04:33

I mean, I guess I would say that if we talk about maybe the 80/20 rule, yeah, maybe that would be helpful like so. I mean, I think about the 80/20 rule in nutrition as permission, not pressure. So 80% of the time we try to choose foods that support our energy, our health, our future selves. Think of it this way. That's like real food, enough protein and fiber, hydrate. Conversation and meals that like actually nourish us, and then the other 20% that's life. So that's the soft pretzel, and that's like being sad, or maybe that's a friend of yours that comes over some brownies, and you sit down and you eat them with

her, and you enjoy them, because food is meant to be enjoyed, you know, like, I mean to me, what matters isn't perfection. It's really just consistency. Like, health isn't built on one good meal, and it's certainly not ruined by one bad one. It's really just built on, like, what we do most of the time. Does that make sense?

Rosanne Corcoran 05:37

Oh, it makes perfect sense. And it sounds so counterintuitive to what we always hear, which is what the challenge is, right? Yeah.

Lauren Fisher 05:44

I mean, listen, I think for a lot of people, especially those who have spent years in the diet cycles. I speak for myself here, like the 80/20 rule kind of helps calm the nervous system, right? Like it says you don't have to be perfect to be healthy, like you can just be mostly consistent and also kind to yourself along the way. And I feel like the irony is, like, when food stops being forbidden, people do make better choices naturally, right? We don't have this like this is bad and this is good. Like with my clients, I try to frame like there are healthier choices and unhealthy choices, but there's no bad choices and there's no forbidden food, right? Because if you think about it, we grew up, we had a lot of foods that were forbidden, we weren't allowed to eat, right? And so we still have those rebel kids inside of us, and we still want those foods, and that's okay, right?

Rosanne Corcoran 06:41

I mean, I know you talk about the diet crazes, I think we've, we've all hit as many as we could, and it was always like, I'm gonna start on Monday, so this weekend, this weekend, I'm having what I want to have. And it's almost like a punishment from what I hear you saying is we have to be more compassionate with ourselves in this whole process,

Lauren Fisher 07:03

Always, yeah, because our relationship with food started young, you know, and so just recognizing sometimes we're going to use food to soothe and that's okay. I do it too, you know. I sometimes I make better choices, but I do it too. So it's completely natural, yeah? I mean, I think, I mean, I am, I'm not a self care advocate, but I am a self compassion advocate, because I do think that the way we talk to ourselves is important

Rosanne Corcoran 07:27

Fully agree. I think self care has been weaponized to be a dirty word, and especially for caregivers, it always when somebody would say to me, you know, you take care of yourself, it's like, yeah, I know, I know. Can you tell me? How can you tell me where I'm slipping this in? And because we have these ideas of that perfection that we can't get to, and this sounds a lot more 80/20, I think, I think everybody, I think it's a little more palatable.

Lauren Fisher 07:54

Yeah, well, and it is. I mean, we come from the all or nothing, right? I think that paradigm makes a lot of sense, right? A lot of my clients will say, like, well, the day was already ruined, right, right, things like that, right? And it's how we grew up. So it's just reframing, I think,

Rosanne Corcoran 08:09

Well, and you know, saying the day's already ruined is like, having one flat tire and flattening the other three

Lauren Fisher 08:15

Kind of,

Rosanne Corcoran 08:16

Right? Like, okay, well, it was just one flat, you will come back from that yeah,

Lauren Fisher 08:20

Yeah, yeah.

Rosanne Corcoran 08:22

And I'm thinking this is probably goes with exercise as well, because exercise, oh, you know, it feels impossible when you're caregiving. How can we reframe the idea of movement so that it actually gives energy instead of taking it from us?

Lauren Fisher 08:36

Yeah? I mean, I help people really stop thinking about exercise as something they have to train for, and start about movement as something that's meant to support them, right? Tell me more about that. Yeah. So the thing is, when you're caregiving, your nervous system is already working overtime, right? Totally. So the goal isn't to burn calories or hit a class, it's really just to restore your energy, right? Exercise is one of those things that actually gives you time back, because you have more energy to do other things, right? And so this might look like a five minute walk outside, or I'm a huge fan of habit stacking so gentle stretching while you're making coffee, right? Or just strength movements to protect your back and joints, so caregiving itself like might feel easier again. I think when movement is framed as self compassion instead of self discipline, it becomes more accessible, right? And so, like, if we start to think about it in terms of like, movement snacks instead of, like, I need to do this for four hours, like movement, snacks are really just short, intentional burst of movement, like, usually one to five minutes, like, sprinkled throughout the day, okay, not even workouts. They're not even about breaking a sweat. They're just about. Reminding your body that it's allowed to move.

Rosanne Corcoran 10:03

Okay, well, so it's not, it's not I have to go do this for 20 minutes straight. It's I'm gonna do, I'm gonna do five squats and six side bends or something like, what, what does it look like?

Lauren Fisher 10:15

Well, I mean, the first thing is, like five minutes matters because it gets the blood flowing and it also wakes up your muscles, and it helps regulate stress hormones. So long periods of stillness or stress, as you can probably attest to, like, leave your body feeling tight, tired and depleted. And so, like, what we're talking about is like three or four, five minute movement snacks that actually improve your energy, your mood, and probably your insulin sensitivity. And they don't require like, extra time, childcare or

equipment, right? And it just shifts the mindset from I don't have time to exercise to I can support the body right now, so yeah, like exactly a couple squats, some push ups, some sit ups, a walk right, like, something like that. Like, I think, if we're talking about, maybe the question is really around, like, enough movement?

Rosanne Corcoran 11:12

Well, yeah, yeah. Because, because, when that, that 150 minutes a week is like a billboard on the wall. You got to hit these, you got to get 150 and it's like, I don't know where I'm getting 150 so what would enough movement look like?

Lauren Fisher 11:29

Well, I mean to me, enough movement is whatever helps your body feel a little bit more capable at the end of the day than it did at the beginning, right? So for someone who's already stretched thin, like, that's just like, as I said, like a wah a few rounds of gentle strength that protects joints, like simply standing up and moving. I like to dance. I like a dance break between clients. Sometimes, like, for me, that's a movement snack. But a lot of times, I think we've been taught that movement only counts if it's intense or time consuming, but for people who are time poor, like, you know, caregivers absolutely, yeah, enough. Movement is really just about maintenance, right? And when I say maintenance, I'm just talking about maintaining strength, mobility, balance and energy, so that the work that you're already doing doesn't break you down, right? Movement supports daily life instead of competing with it. People stop feeling behind, and I think they just start feeling more capable. And that's where consistency lives.

Rosanne Corcoran 12:31

Well, and it's it's really hard because, along with caregivers feeling like, oh my goodness, I have to take care of myself now so that I'm not in this position later. Yeah, the position of care being cared for. And in the meantime, we may be hurting ourselves by providing this assistance, whether it's through lifting somebody or turning somebody, or anything like that. So it's, it's important to bring that movement in and to bring that strength in so that we can continue to do what we're doing. It's a matter of then finding which things work in that short amount of time. Is that accurate?

Lauren Fisher 13:14

Yes. I mean, I think squats and lunges are probably one of the best mobility exercises. And they will keep your lower body strong, which is the most important in terms of metabolic health also. So I mean, I think, yes, I think it's, I think it's all important. I think the better we take care of ourselves, the better we can take care of other people, right? And so we just have to remember that it doesn't take a lot of time. Like, what usually takes up a lot of space for people is the mental chatter about what they should be doing. Absolutely, yeah, if we, if we don't frame it as I should be, but I can be like, you know, the body is meant to move. We're not, we're not meant to be still for 11 hours a day. We're really not,

Lauren Fisher 14:05

No, no. I mean, and caregiving really changes your your body, your sleep, your nutrition. It changes everything because of the stressors. And when you said about metabolic it helps you metabolically, we know with insulin and with sugar and with how everything interacts with your body when you're sitting, you know, what do they say? Sitting is the new smoking. That's the new thing now. So lower body

exercises seem to be more productive in both metabolic world and in the sugar correct resistance area. Is that?

Lauren Fisher 14:42

Okay? Yeah, that's correct. I mean, even getting off the floor without using your hands, right? Is good exercise, because obviously, as people get older, falling is a concern, and we just want people to be able to get up. And that's why sit ups are important too, because they strengthen the core, and the core helps you to get off the floor. Or right? So that's what I mean about like habit stacking, if you're doing something else in the kitchen, like sit ups, you know, roll a mat down and just do some sit ups.

Rosanne Corcoran 15:10

Gosh, is there another is there another variety or alternative to sit ups?

Lauren Fisher 15:15

Lauren, yes. How about a plank?

Rosanne Corcoran 15:19

That's better? Yeah, yeah. Can we replace sit ups with planks?

Lauren Fisher 15:22

Yeah, okay, for the purpose of this podcast, we absolutely can. Okay, yeah, yeah. I mean, there's a lot, yeah. I mean, I think there's a lot of exercises to me, when people say to me, like, what's the best exercise? I usually say the one you do, like, it's, I'm not so prescriptive about it. I want people to enjoy their lives and enjoy exercise, and so we find the things that work for us, you know. And I would also just say, sometimes don't believe everything you think around exercise, you know, because we sometimes have traumatic experiences in our past, whether it's like a gym class or a team that we didn't make, or, you know, whatever it is that keep us from sort of doing things that we haven't done before, you know. And as adults like, we're not going to be good at things that we haven't practiced when we were young. We practice things, you know. And we didn't get good at piano by never playing. We got good at piano by practicing, you know, right? So, yes, I think some of that just requires self compassion, where we can just be with ourselves and be like, Okay, this might be hard now, but it's gonna get easier.

Rosanne Corcoran 16:29

Yes, you know, is there a way? And I you know, this is a hypothetical Lauren, but is there a way to make it more enjoyable? I mean, you know, I know people I live with people who work out every day, and it's like, you know, it's my it's my stress relief, or it's, it's my happy place. How can we get to that point of being this is good? No, no. I really like this.

Lauren Fisher 16:55

Well, here's what I will say. I don't think anyone ever wished that they didn't exercise. Once they're done, exercise is probably the best drug for depression. It really does help us to feel better. So I think over time, the more you do it, and the more your body responds to it, the easier it is, and the better it feels.

Rosanne Corcoran 17:18

And that was my next question, because you know, there is a there's a trail of grief that runs through caregiving that you may or may not realize, and trying to work out when you feel this grief or when you're depressed, it's really hard, but what you're saying is, that's what will help that,

Lauren Fisher 17:37

Yeah, I am okay. Okay, when we're talking about mental health, exercise is better. I think it's better than SSRIs, really, yeah, yeah. It has better results, yeah,

Rosanne Corcoran 17:52

Even in these movement snacks, yeah, really,

Lauren Fisher 17:55

Yeah, yeah, it does make us feel better. I mean, listen, I'll speak. I'll speak for myself here, and I will probably speak for a lot of my clients when I say that for me, exercise helps me get out of my mind and into my body, which is a much nicer place most people's minds are a bad neighborhood that they shouldn't go in at night by themselves. And when we're exercising, we spend less time in the mind and more time in the body, and it is just more calming overall. Yeah, yeah. And again, I want, I want people to think of it as progress, not perfection. It doesn't have to be perfect, and it doesn't have to be at a time that doesn't work for you. It really doesn't, and it doesn't have to be all the time. It just has to be a little better than it was the week before.

Rosanne Corcoran 18:39

Okay, so you can build on top of it, yeah? And not be so hard on yourself when you don't correct.

Lauren Fisher 18:47

Yeah? That's, I mean, for sure, that is, that is the goal. Like, this is not another area to beat ourselves up. This is an area to hopefully be proud of ourselves for doing something that we didn't necessarily want to do, but that we did anyway,

Rosanne Corcoran 19:02

Right, right. Okay, okay, well, you know, another cornerstone of health is sleep, and you know, it's usually the one of the first things caregivers sacrifice. Why is it so critical, and how can caregivers protect it in realistic ways?

Lauren Fisher 19:19

Yeah, so sleep is really critical, because it's the foundation that makes everything else possible. So when we're under slept, it's not just fatigue, right? It affects our mood, it affects our patients, it affects our immune function, it affects our blood sugar and how resilient we feel emotionally, right? And without sleep, even small stressors can feel really overwhelming, right? Yeah. So if you can't control how long you sleep, I would just say, instead of chasing perfect sleep, I really encourage people to protect the quality of the sleep that they do get. Okay. Okay, so one small change that can really improve sleep quality, I think, is like a short, consistent, wind down routine. And okay, when I say short, I just mean

five minutes. So at night, maybe just Dimming the lights, putting the phone away, just for a minute, couple minutes, taking a few slow breaths, right? Or doing like, gentle stretch, I like to shower before bed sometimes, because it just lowers the core body temperature and, like, just tells the body that, like, we're getting ready for bed. But over time, that kind of repetition just tells the nervous system it's safe to rest now, so we don't need like, elaborate nighttime routines. We just need like, signals of safety and permission to rest, so even small boundaries around sleep can make a meaningful difference. Does that make sense?

Rosanne Corcoran 20:53

Yeah. I mean, it absolutely does. You know, I know some people, and I shouldn't say some people I know I use the phone as I don't even know what I use it as anymore. I'm trying not, you know, I'm trying not to, yeah, an alarm clock. I'm trying not to look at it. But there's, I have games on my phone. I have, it's just silly. It's just silly stuff. And when I look at it like, well, that's my wind down time. It really isn't a wind down time is it?

Lauren Fisher 21:21

This is such a tough one, because technology is designed to be addictive, right? So there's nothing, there's nothing wrong with us, because we're addicted to our phones, right? And also people like you and me, like we operate our business on technology, right? It's great, and we also have to parent ourselves around it. It hasn't been around that long, right? And so it's a new thing for us. And what I would say is it's not great for sleep, because the phone simulates blue light, and blue light is daylight, and it wakes us up. So I mean, putting our phone out of the way, like a lot of people say to me, like, my phone is my alarm clock, which is, you know, my favorite response from all my clients. And also, we all grew up having alarm clocks, right? Like we didn't have phones. So everyone knows that you can also get an alarm clock. I have one. I'm a huge fan of it. My phone, my room has no technology, really zero, and it's always been like that, because I just realize I sleep better. So my phone charges in my office. It has a phone sleeping bag, and that's what I do with it. But again, like, I don't want this to be an area where anyone beats themselves up about it, because playing games on your phone can be fun, and, you know, it can be a respite, I'm sure, as a caregiver, to be able to do Wordle, or whatever that is, and so I'm not saying don't do that. I'm just saying, yeah. I mean, we might need, like, some micro boundaries, maybe, yeah, around rest, you know. And those are just small limits that protect our energy without requiring like, giant life changes, like, like, like, if rest often feels like all or nothing, right, like either you're on or everything's falling apart, I would say like, micro boundaries are kind of in the middle. They just create, like, small pauses where your nervous system can reset. And so technology is actually the easiest place to start, because, like, you can do something simple, like silencing non urgent notifications, or like putting a Do Not Disturb on your phone, or just putting your phone out of reach, maybe during a meal, yeah, just going outside and leaving your phone inside, right? Yeah, but at least, like a few minutes before bedtime can significantly reduce the mental load, because we just don't realize that there's a lot of like incoming on our phones, and so like we are, we will be in fight or flight, sometimes without realizing it, when we get a notification or there's a text message from someone, and it's just really about deciding what You want to let in and when you do right. Key to these boundaries is they're tiny, but just they need to be more consistent, right? And I'm not asking anyone to disappear or abandon their responsibilities. You're just giving your brain like a short moment of relief. And I feel like

those moments add up, like rest doesn't come from long breaks. It just comes from protected moments of just saying, like, I matter too,

Rosanne Corcoran 24:26

Yes, yes. And it's, it's really hard in caregiving, because, you know, that's our that's our gateway to being connected, right? If somebody you know, whether you know, when I took care of my mom, she lived with me, I had a had a ringtone for everybody that lived in my house and anybody that was calling, so that I knew when the phone rang, who it was, before I looked at it. But it also gave me the ability to be able to know who was calling. Now, you don't always have that if somebody's at a rehab or if somebody. In a hospital and you have to leave your phone on. That's where it gets really hard, not being able to turn off from it. But what I think I'm hearing you say is it doesn't matter, because you can still find these times during the day, because you don't have to be on 24/7 we think we do, but nobody can be on 24/7

Lauren Fisher 25:19

No, I don't. Yeah. I mean, I think it's also about having realistic expectations, yes, of ourselves, right? It's like, this is, this is what I can do and this is what I can't do, right? Yeah? Like, I will often say to people, like, I'm available for this, but I'm not available for this, right? And that's, you know, that's just part of, like, knowing ourselves, you know, yeah.

Rosanne Corcoran 25:45

And it goes back to that self compassion you're allowed to take this time. You're allowed to take a break.

Lauren Fisher 25:52

Yes, yes. And the better you take care of yourself, the better you can show up for others, right? Because if you're emotionally dysregulated and exhausted. What's the chance that you're going to be really compassionate at the bedside? We do. We do bring our whole selves to the bedside too, right? And so I think that, you know, I'm in school now for contemplative care, and we're learning how to how to witness ourselves and witness our own dysregulation, so that we don't bring it to the bedside, through meditation, through journaling and through stress and stress management. It's, it's really important that we don't bring all of that to other people, right? Especially people who are dying,

Rosanne Corcoran 26:36

Absolutely, no, absolutely. And you know, you brought it up. I'm gonna go through here stress management, you know, with with caregiving, it's such an emotional demand. It's, it's a chronic emotional demand. You know, you say stress tools are survival strategies, not luxuries. Why?

Lauren Fisher 26:57

Well, I mean, the thing is, when emotional demand is constant, like your nervous system doesn't get to stand down, right so over time, like that, kind of stress affects sleep, immunity, digestion, mood, and how connected we are to ourselves and others. Yeah. So the reason that I say that stress tools aren't luxuries, they're really just about regulation, like we're just working on regulating ourselves, things like tools, like breathing, right? Like this is so important, but most people just take, like, small sips of air

during day, right? So, like just a deep breath, can refresh people and a short walk, or, like moments of quiet, like even naming what you're feeling brings the body out of fight or flight. And so without ways to regulate stress, people end up running on adrenaline, and then they burn out or they get sick. So with simple stress tools, like, we can stay present and resilient longer, which, like, really kind of helps us to, like, take care of others without disappearing. Yeah, yeah. So to me, managing stress isn't about doing more. It's about having ways to come back to baseline again and again.

Rosanne Corcoran 28:12

What kind of tools are you speaking about?

Lauren Fisher 28:14

Well, I think, like, the first thing that's really, really important is we carry this invisible belief. And I don't just mean caregivers. I think everybody kind of carries this invisible belief that they have to fix everything absolutely like emotion, every outcome, every moment of discomfort, right? And I do feel like that pressure is exhausting, and so to me, like one of the most helpful reframes is just shifting from How do I fix this to what would make this 5% easier, right now, right? That question immediately brings the nervous system down, like it invites realism instead of perfection. Like you might see a theme through this,

Rosanne Corcoran 28:56

Yeah, a little bit, yeah,

Lauren Fisher 28:58

Which is just progress, like we're not, we're not trying to do this perfectly. We're trying to realize that, like, our job isn't to play God with ourselves or others. You know, we're not, not trying to fix and manage and control. We're just trying to be with it all, with ourselves and others. Right in the middle of a hard day, like a nervous system reset can be really small, right? It's just a slow exhale that's longer than the inhale. I mean, I'm a huge fan of grounding. We just forget where our feet are sometimes, right? So for me, like going outside, even if it's cold, and just like putting my feet in the ground and just remembering where I am getting fresh air, I think is really important naming what's hard, instead of pushing it away. I do this exercise where, like, when I'm in the shower, I try to be just in the shower, meaning, I had a meditation teacher at once that said, like, how often are you really in the shower? And I was like, oh, yeah, I know what he means. Because I'm, like, making a food. List, or thinking about the people that I have to call back, or what my clients need for me, and instead, I try to just be in the shower. So that means, like, paying attention to the suds and the water and the soap and the smells and just how I'm feeling, and that often, like, can reset your entire nervous system, right? Because, as I said, like, when we prioritize our own well being, it doesn't take away from others. Like, actually just improves how we show up. We're more patient, we're more present, we're less reactive, and then I think care becomes more sustainable and less resentful. So like, not to beat the drum, but like, wellness isn't being selfish. It's what allows us to keep caring for others without losing ourselves in the process.

Rosanne Corcoran 30:47

Yeah, and it's easy to lose yourself, it's easy to lose the connection with your body. It's easy to not breathe. Yeah, you know, I wore my shoulders as earrings for years, yep. I mean, I just did it's just how

it was. And did you feel it when you were doing it? No, I just, I would be like, Oh, wait, I think my shoulders are too high, you know, I and then I would have to be like, Okay, I would actually sit and pull my shoulders down. Like, keep them down, you know? I mean, I used to grind my teeth. It was horrible. I would clench my jaw during the day, and I would put my tongue between my teeth to prevent myself from clenching my jaw. And it's a shame I didn't know all of this then, because it really would have been helpful, you know, and that's why we're talking about it today. Because, yeah, it doesn't have to be so hard, and it doesn't have to feel so unattainable, because that's self defeating to look at this and be like, I can't I can't eat better, I can't exercise, I don't know, you know, my sleep's for nothing. This is all helpful and practical, and it doesn't take a lot.

Lauren Fisher 31:57

And also, you can pick one, yes, pick all four. I mean, we're just talking about four, because to me, sort of the four most important ways we can take care of our mental and physical health, right? But I think ultimately, if you're caregiving, and you just decide that I'm going to go for a walk today, great. And if you do nothing else that's amazing, right? And if you take a bath, you know, and just stay in the bath, and just be in the bath, that's amazing, you know, yeah, yeah, you feel even a little bit better. You're gonna do that again, right? And, and I also feel like an object in motion stays in motion, meaning that when you start to see that actually, it does help you to show up at the bedside better, then you can do more of it, right, right, right? Because I think the desire really is to be really compassionate with ourselves, so that we can be compassionate with others.

Rosanne Corcoran 32:54

I fully agree. I fully agree. And we, we forget ourselves. Yeah, because everything's outward, we're everything that we have. We're putting forward. Yeah, gosh. And part of it is also trying to regulate our emotions, yeah? And it's, it's really hard because sometimes it's, it's that commercial things come at you fast, and you don't know what's happening from sometimes from minute to minute. But can you explain the the 92nd rule and how it helps caregivers relate differently to these intense emotions.

Lauren Fisher 33:26

Sure, well, so the 90 second rule really comes from neuroscience, and it just explains the physiological surge of an emotion. So the rush of adrenaline, cortisol, heart rate typically lasts from 60 to 90 seconds if we don't keep feeding it with our thoughts. So this is really powerful because it creates the space between feeling an emotion and becoming an emotion. So you can just say, this is a wave, and I don't have to solve this right now. So in other words, like, if I, if we think about it as, like, I'm the surfer, not the wave, because what keeps emotion stuck isn't the feeling, it's the mental loop. So it's the story that we're telling around the emotion. So I don't know, let's say that you're taking care of someone. I've had this experience before. If you're taking care of someone and they snap at you, at you, right? And you just think, like, oh my god, I'm doing everything wrong. And then it's, I'm doing everything wrong, and I'm giving all my time and attention to this person they don't even appreciate. And then we keep going and keep going and keep going. And it's this mental loop, right? And that, like in Buddhism, we call that the second arrow. The first arrow is what actually is happening, and the second arrow is more damaging because it's the story that we're telling about what's happening. Okay? And so sometimes we just have to take the 90 seconds to just let that emotion sit and it will. Go away as long as we don't feed it, and that's practices like journaling or naming the feeling, or I'm a fan of voice notes. Reason why is

because even three minutes of journaling works because it just offloads mental clutter. Yeah, like, so we're not trying to write something insightful, like it's not going to be published. We're just clearing our brain of open tabs. So once we externalize something, it just feels more manageable, and so like a practice of just asking, like, what am I actually feeling like if we literally have that conversation with ourselves? That reduces overwhelm, because the brain calms when something is named, because stressed might actually become grief or fear or anger or even exhaustion. Each of those needs something different, right?

Rosanne Corcoran 35:49

Yeah, yeah. A common thought is, I can't look at this. I don't have time to look at this. Or if I look at this, it's going to upset me so much. I'm not going to be able to get on top of it. I'm going to go to pieces, and I'm never going to come back from it, which we know is not accurate, correct, but this sounds like it can kind of diffuse that a little bit,

Lauren Fisher 36:12

Yeah, I think so. I mean, I think, you know, underlying all of this is self compassion, right? Yeah, I mean, and that's why I like voice notes, because with some added compassion. Hearing your own voice creates a sense of being witnessed, right? I think for a lot of people like we've spent our lives not feeling heard, not feeling seen, and so we do have an opportunity to see and witness and hear ourselves. Yeah, you know,

Rosanne Corcoran 36:39

I fully agree with you, I would write myself notes like you're doing the best that you can. This is really the situation, you know, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. And even seeing it on the on paper made me go. And I would record my mother on my iPhone, and I could hear the tone of her voice, and I could hear the tone of my voice, and you you can hear it, and you can go, you know you're doing the best you can, but you can't hear it in those moments, but when you listen back, you can hear it. So I think that's a great idea.

Lauren Fisher 37:13

Yeah. I mean, we're not trying to fix emotion, right?

Rosanne Corcoran 37:15

No, no, not at all.

Lauren Fisher 37:17

We're just trying to let them move through without taking over, right, right? Yeah, that's the goal, you know, yeah.

Rosanne Corcoran 37:24

And it's, you know, full disclosure here, I've been working with you, and this isn't something I would have been able to do when I was in the middle of caregiving, and it's a shame, because it really would have helped. All of my compassion was going out. I didn't have it for myself. The continuing theme here is that self compassion for you, so that you can care for yourself, because you do matter in all of this.

And this journey comes to an end, and you have to pick up the pieces. And trying to pick up the pieces when you have completely broken apart is very different than picking up a few pieces here and there. Yeah, and I, you know, I think all of this is, is such a helpful little bites that you can do along the way. Which is, which is how we make it through. If, if a caregiver listening today could only choose one small step, where would you suggest they start.

Lauren Fisher 38:21

I mean, I mean, I guess what I would say is like I would start by letting go of self judgment, not by adding another habit, not by doing self care better, because we hate that word, right? But by noticing the inner voice that says I should be handling this better and gently replacing it with, given what I'm carrying, I'm already doing something brave. Say that again, given what I'm carrying, I'm already doing something brave. I mean, I just feel like, when judgment softens, the nervous system can finally exhale, you know. And when the nervous feels like, when the nervous system feels safer, like change becomes possible. So if we can start with the self judgment piece, then we can get to the other stuff,

Rosanne Corcoran 39:07

Yeah, yeah, because we're so hard on ourselves, yeah, so hard on ourselves. And then something goes something goes wrong in a world where you have no training and no education, and something happens, and you think, oh, I should have seen that coming, do you know? But the first thing we do is say I failed and not I'm doing the best I can.

Lauren Fisher 39:34

Yeah, I think the most important thing is the relationship that we have with ourselves when we're by ourselves, right? And so we work to make sure that we're okay first, so that we don't bring our not okayness to the bedside. You know?

Rosanne Corcoran 39:53

Yeah, wow, we're okay. And okay can mean a lot of different things, yes, so how do we. What's our gauge?

Lauren Fisher 40:01

I mean, I would just say calm and present. You know, present means available for ourselves and others that we're not in the future and that we're not planning for later. You know that we're not thinking about all the things that we have to do, that we can just be with ourselves and others. Because, you know, I kind of, I just believe that our legacy is about how we love and how we love ourselves and other people. Yeah, I don't think people, I mean, like Maya Angelou said, like, I don't think people remember what you say, but I do think they remember how you make them feel absolutely so that's a desire, right? Is to help people feel loved and supported and understood and seen. And in order to do that, we have to, we have to start here.

Rosanne Corcoran 40:47

I fully agree with you. I fully agree with you. What would you want caregivers to know if they're feeling depleted or if they're feeling behind or like they're failing at, you know, being compassionate with themselves or with self care?

Lauren Fisher 41:00

I mean, I think that that's okay. I think it's okay like anything that you feel is okay, and it's also okay not to believe everything you think, because that's not true. And you are doing something brave, and you are doing something hard, and to maybe give yourself a break if you can, and take care of yourself, you know, with nutrition, with sleep, with exercise, stress management and emotional regulation to the best of your ability, and reach out for help like you're not meant to do this life alone.

Rosanne Corcoran 41:33

A big thank you to Lauren Fisher for being my guest today. We have a special opportunity with Lauren as she will be leading a Daughterhood circle on Tuesday, February 18, at 7pm Eastern. If you would like to hear more from her or ask her any of your questions, you can register@daughterhood.org under the circle tab. You can also find her at LaurenFisherHealthCoaching.com I hope you enjoyed today's episode and found something helpful, whether it was information, inspiration, or even just a little company. You'll find the full transcript and links to resources mentioned today [@daughterhood.org](mailto:register@daughterhood.org) in the podcast section. While you're there, explore more of what Daughterhood offers. We're more than a podcast. We're a nonprofit community providing free services and support for caregivers, including nationwide virtual support groups. We call circles. On our website, you can register for a circle, sign up for our newsletter and read our founders blog. Don't forget to subscribe and review us on Apple podcasts or wherever you listen. Your reviews help other caregivers discover the support they need. Follow us on Facebook and Instagram [@daughterhood](https://www.instagram.com/daughterhood) to stay connected, and if you know someone else who may benefit from Daughterhood, share it with them. Also a very special thank you to Susan Rowe for our theme music. Mama's Eyes. This is Rosanne Corcoran. I'm so grateful you spent your time with me, and I look forward to being with you again next time here in Daughterhood.