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## Hope & proactive joy

By Linda Fodrini-Johnson



Linda Fodrini-Johnson, MA, MFT, CMC, is a Licensed Family Therapist and Certified Care Manager. She has been practicing professional care management since 1984. Linda founded Eldercare Services, a full-service care management and home care company in 1989. Eldercare Services is now a division of Home Care Assistance and continues to provide Bay Area families with care management, advocacy, counseling, support groups and education.

their long lives and still are filled with joy. There are two common themes that I have seen in these people: one is gratefulness and the other is to seek joy in the moments. In their gratefulness they are also generous with their time to talk to others or give financial support to causes dear to their hearts. I am going to call these people the "Resilient."

Seeking joy is much more a proactive move than expecting joy to just happen. True, occasionally we are surprised by nature or an unexpected gift or visit. The resilient actually seek out joy; they read positive daily meditations, they read the comics, they listen to uplifting music or anything that ever brought them joy. They find a way to still stay connected to that passion. A sailing enthusiast might not be able to sail due to vision or mobility, but they can still get to the water and watch, smell the air or feel the sand or a moving dock, not with regret, but with gratefulness and joy.

Forest bathing, known as shinrin-yoku in Japan, is a therapeutic, meditative practice of reconnecting with nature and being distracted by any of those "joy stealing" feelings. It usually starts with a breathing relaxation exercise and then a walk/stroll or even just sitting in a wooded area. See the resources section of my newsletter for a great book that will guide you in "forest bathing." During my daily walks I look for shapes and geometry in the nature; I also love to focus on the colors in the sky and clouds.

February is thought of as the month of love because of Valentine's Day, but if you are burdened with a life challenge, it can be a sad time, especially if you have had a major loss or have a serious health challenge. This month I challenge you to seek "Joy" if only for a few moments beginning today and then seek just a few more such moments on each day to follow. Find someone to confide in and be your companion on this journey of seeking joy in the snippets of life.

Dr. Atul Gawande in his book "Being Mortal" (a good read) says we want to live till we die - not die years before. This is what you do: you plant the seeds of joy. They won't cure or fill the scars of life, but they will allow you to live and smile.

The next free Zoom Class for Family Caregivers will be at 11 a.m. April 8 on Dementia: From diagnosis to home care. If you are concerned about someone in the early stages of memory loss, this class is for you.

"Hope Springs Eternal." That saying is from "An Essay on Man," by Alexander Pope. People always hope for the best, even in the face of adversity. This is what we want to hang onto and something I try to help all my clients find. However, in the midst of pain, this "elusive hope" can be a blur and be forgotten.

Waiting and wishing for a change in our physical health, mental health or relationships can bring us down. Often, we hear that it is not time for a procedure. We may think it is not time to bring in help to a family member or even the time to move a loved one into senior living. The latter often involves denial or resistance from us and/or the person we are concerned about.

Then there are those illnesses that have no treatments to cure such as: Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, some cancers and cardiac diagnoses as well as some relentless mental health challenges to name a few. I should add "grief" to this list as well.

Spiritual individuals even have difficulty connecting with God when pain, dependence and disappointment seem to be about every waking moment. So, what do we mortals need to do? Where will we get our substance to go on each day? Individuals question their faith and, during this time of COVID, many houses of worship are not as open as they were. Many feel excluded and forgotten, especially those who don't do Zoom or can't get to the only service that might be too early for a disabled individual to attend.

There is no one answer for us to find joy despite adversity. In my career I have met many individuals that somehow survived many trials and tribulations during

Just send me an email [www.LindaFodrini-Johnson.com](http://www.LindaFodrini-Johnson.com) and I will put you on the list.

Reach the reporter at: [info@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:info@lamorindaweekly.com)

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