



Brain Health For Caregivers

**Dr. Heather Sandison, N.D. interviewing
Peggy Sarlin**



Dr. Heather Sandison, N.D.

Welcome back to the Reverse Alzheimer's Summit. I'm your host, Dr. Heather Sandison. I'm thrilled to have my dear friend, Peggy Sarlin joining us today. She's the author and host of "Awakening from Alzheimer's", a pioneering book and video series exploring the innovative techniques used to reverse Alzheimer's. The huge success of "Awakening from Alzheimer's" inspired her to write and host "Regain Your Brain", which brought even more good news about improving cognitive health. Peggy was a caregiver to her husband for more than eight years and understands personally the stress that caregivers experience. She is committed to providing families with the best information available for improving brain health. Peggy, thank you so much for being here.

Peggy Sarlin

Thank you, Dr. Sandison. Thank you so much for inviting me.

Dr. Heather Sandison, N.D.

Of course, it's really important this topic around caregivers and their stress, but I want to start with how you got into writing one of the first books about reversing Alzheimer's?

Peggy Sarlin

Well I had no personal experience with it, it doesn't run in my family, but my publisher Lee Euler called me up in 2012, and his mother had just passed away from Alzheimer's, and he said, can you find if there's anything we can do to help these people? Because you know, he had the typical experience that probably many people listening now have had where you get a very quick diagnosis and you say, you know, give your mom a receipt, and go home and prepare for your certain doom, you know? He said, can't we do better than this? So I said, I'll look, let me see, I don't know. And as soon as I started diving in, I was just, I was actually overwhelmed by how much I found, I couldn't believe it. For instance, it seems kind of



obvious, but it isn't, and it wasn't, which is that many times people are diagnosed with Alzheimer's and they don't have Alzheimer's, they have something that's treatable, and Dr. Sandison, you know, maybe you've seen this, for example, they're on so many medications that their brains are scrambled as a side effect of medications. And then the doctor says, oh, this is Alzheimer's, here take this pill for that. So now you've added an additional pill they don't even need, and the underlining causes are not being treated. So is that something that you have seen in your own practice?

Dr. Heather Sandison, N.D.

Yeah, and you and I both know Dr. Dale Bredesen and he talks about how even different Alzheimer's patients, even though they have the same presentation of this failing memory, they've taken different paths to get there. So sometimes it's more toxicity, other times it's maybe because of hormones, you're absolutely right, medications can kind of contribute to that level of toxicity, that exactly, as you mentioned, people said that to me out loud in my clinic, it feels like my brain is scrambled. And so understanding how someone got there is so important to unraveling and reversing the process.

Peggy Sarlin

That's that's the whole game that you're playing and all the brilliant doctors you're going to talk to, they're playing that game too. So another one, the patient may have a urinary tract infection, they may be dehydrated, it may be other things like this that you can treat and they can start getting better. So that was the first thing, like, hallelujah, wow, you could do stuff for them, and then again, simple stuff like, wow, vitamin D, if you don't have enough of it that really can contribute to cognitive decline, just get their vitamin D up to an optimal level, they're going to get better. Give them curcumin, give them coconut oil, which can provide their brain with ketones.

Give them a Coenzyme Q10. I started finding all these things that I could not believe how much there was to help people. And so I put everything I could find into a book, and as far as I know, it's the first one that did that, and that was back in 2012, and so that was kind of a hit right away, 'cause there wasn't anything like it, you know, it was just providing a service. But for me it was intellectual, wow, this is fascinating, you know, look at all this stuff with the brain. And then a few months after the book was published, my husband had a massive stroke, just out of nowhere, November 2012, massive stroke that left him paralyzed on the left side. People who are dealing with some kind of dementia, typically have a more gradual



path, it's not like some, you know, turning off the light, but that's what it was in my case. So I went overnight to being in charge of a 6'4", my husband was huge, 6'4" paralyzed man having frequent seizures in intense pain, and somehow I had to make all this work. And it was his brain, it wasn't Alzheimer's, but it was his brain. And I found myself right there with those caregivers saying, this is the toughest thing I have ever, ever done, you know?

Dr. Heather Sandison, N.D.

The demands on someone who is in a caregiving position, particularly a family member, it really can be extremely profoundly stressful and undermine your brain health. We've talked to other health coaches and people have shared statistics, just astounding statistics about how at-risk caregivers are for developing dementia later in life. So talk a little a bit about those unique demands that you experienced?

Peggy Sarlin

Well, I think one of the biggest stresses in life you can feel is when you're not in control, and by definition, if you're a caregiver of somebody who's very sick, there is no control, I mean it was 24/7. And so what are the things that we know you need for good brain health? Sleep, you know, I never had an uninterrupted, there was always an emergency, you know? What do you need, you need good food. Who at the time to shop for healthy food, to prepare for it, to think about it, to deal with it. Exercise, as soon as I had solved a problem with my husband, I immediately needed to lie down and recover. You know, I remember a friend said to me, go outside, take a walk for 10 minutes.

And I'm saying that because probably every caregiver has heard that, that is standard advice, take a walk for 10 minutes. And I said him, you don't understand? I could fly to the moon as much as I could take a walk for 10 minutes. I'm blessed personally to live a block from a beautiful park here in New York City, I couldn't make it that far. I discovered what the word bone weary means, I literally felt my bones ache. And I just think that many people who are listening to this know what I'm talking about. And you feel in yourself that you're not healthy, you can feel the stress corroding you, I did, you know, and it's corroding your brain, right, doctor, maybe you can help me out here, it's the cortisol is physically affecting the quality of your brain, the health of your brain, right?



Dr. Heather Sandison, N.D.

There's so many things happening there. Like you mentioned, you're not getting good nutrients, our brains need those nutrients or produce enough energy so that we can be present and fully engaged in life. You're not getting enough sleep, you're not able to detoxify, even, you know, set aside the toxins because we live in a relatively toxic world, but it shifts the things of metabolism that builds up throughout the day. So much is going on in our brains during sleep, and if it's interrupted, you're not getting those benefits. And then in addition, you mentioned exercise, right, if we're not getting movement, we're not getting blood flow, we're not getting profusion, we're not getting good blood in or out of our brains.

And then the stress, as you mentioned, cortisol has one of those stress hormones that can affect as a brain cognitive function. Of course, if we're stuck in fight, flight, freeze, right, if we feel constantly under threat because we're jumping from one emergency to the next, if we felt constantly, you know, that when is the next shoe gonna drop? Then it's really hard to heal, to rest, to digest, all of these foundational things for health are essentially absent. And you know, new moms go through this temporarily when they have children, and yet caregivers go through this almost indefinitely. But you never know, your newborn turns three months, and then turned six months, and then starts to gain a little bit more independence, and often at the end of life, when people need care, they only need more and more and more care, and you never know how long it's gonna last.

So that inability to sort of predict, when am I going to get a full night of sleep? And you know, and then having people come in potentially to help into your space when you, you know, you've developed a sense of privacy, and some people, that in addition is very stressful, just to manage another person at that stage in life is very, very challenging. So there are direct influences and impacts on hippocampus, of course, on neuro-transmitters, on so many things that we can point to in the literature, and that I don't have to tell you, right? I don't have to tell caregivers, they feel it, like you said, there's not that sensation of just a weariness. And so I think a lot of people listening in are going to go, yeah, you're talking about me, now what do I do about it?

Peggy Sarlin

What do you do about it, right? What do you do about it? Well, I want to talk about my journey, what worked for me, and it's not simple. So I want to begin by acknowledging that anybody who is caring for somebody they love, who is suffering from Alzheimer's or some



other extremely serious condition, it's complex, and there's no pixie dust to, you know, to toss on top of it, it's tough. And so for me, the foundational virtue I have to find in myself is courage, I have to connect to courage, and maybe you're feeling that too, you need courage. You're not going to make it if you don't. If you don't have it, you have to find it.

And there's a lot of quotes about courage, my favorite is Winston Churchill, who said, "Courage is the first virtue because it makes possible all the others." So all that love, and caring, and tenderness you want to give your loved one, you can't give them unless you're facing this situation with courage. So how do you get courage? I'm going to tell you my journey and see if that works. The first thing I did and I do, because you know, my situation's a little different, but I wouldn't describe my situation as easy. The first thing I do is I look to people who inspire me, and I am blessed that it's my parents, I don't have to look very far, and I'm blessed I still have my parents.

And my parents are amazing people, and they've come through so much, they were children in Europe, in World War II, and they suffered through the Holocaust, and they went through terrible, terrible things and had terrible losses. And they came here as teenagers and built a new life and are the most warm, loving, caring people. So I look to my parents and I say, if they went through that, I can go through this. I'm not going to let them down, I'm not going to look weak, I'm not going to give in. And my father always says to me, you know, I just saw him yesterday, he always says to me, be strong. And now you may be blessed like I am, when I say you I'm speaking to the caregivers in the audience, you may be blessed with parents, or grandparents, or an aunt, or an uncle, or somebody in the community, somebody you personally know who inspires you, and you can just think I'm going to be strong like so-and-so is strong.

You know, they did it, I did it. But you may not, you might not have somebody, you know, in which case maybe you can look to somebody who inspires you in history. You know, Joan of Arc did it, Helen Keller did it, you know, whoever it is, they did it. Somebody is going to serve as a role model to you to say, they did it, I can do it, and I'm not giving in, I'm not giving up, I'm going to get through this. So that's the first thing. Any thoughts about that doctor?



Dr. Heather Sandison, N.D.

You would describe this as like finding those deep well springs, and it is, it's something that comes from inside, right? Someone else can't give it to you. They can inspire you, but really, we're asking someone who's fatigued and tired to dig deep and to find that courage within them. And so it's a challenge, but I think that many people who have taken on the role of caregiving, they're up to it.

Peggy Sarlin

Yeah, I like that, they're up to it. You love somebody, you want to take care of them, love will give you courage, you know? So the next way that I find courage is through prayer. So I want to talk about prayer. And what's interesting to me, because at this point now I've been researching brain health and health in general, for years, and I've heard so much advice from so many great doctors, and what I hear is do meditation, have a meditation practice, and I think, you know, just almost every doctor says that, but I have never meditated. What I don't hear them saying is pray, that's a more rare doctor, and for me, it's prayer, prayer is meditation and a whole lot of other things too. So I'd like to talk about prayer. Prayer is very powerful, one doctor I interviewed Dr. Pamela Wartian Smith told me that prayer is one of the best stress techniques, because you let go and you let God.

And when you let God, you know, this is, God, I can't do this myself, you got to step in here, you know? There's somebody to share your burden with you, it could be 3:00 in the morning and there's nobody to call, but pray, and God will hear you, and you will feel that you've been heard. I interviewed a very eminent neurosurgeon, Dr. Joseph Maroon, and he told me that people aren't, you know, he's about to perform brain surgery on somebody, people are so nervous before surgery, and the most powerful thing that he found he can do is he said, he takes their hand and says, may I pray with you? And if they gave him permission, he says, this is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Now let's go get you well, let's fix you up and get you back to your health and your family. And he said, as he says the prayer, he can feel, holding their hand, he can feel the stress leave their body, and he wants that to happen because he knows that cortisol, the stress hormone, interferes with wound healing, and creates complications in recovering from surgery. So he wants to lower their cortisol. What do you think?



Dr. Heather Sandison, N.D.

I'm sure there's better blood flow, there's all kinds of things. Cortisol also reduces immune function, and we know that immune function plays a big role in brain health, right? We know that beta amyloid plaques form in response to pseudomembranous, infections in the mouth, also to Lyme spirochetes, herpes viruses, other viruses, and I'm sure there's a lot that we don't even know about yet. So making sure that that cortisol level is dialed is so important.

I love that you have shared that feedback, you know, as a provider to hear that from someone who's seen doctors and have everybody say, meditate, my question is usually, do you have a prayer or meditation practice? And I hear the same feedback, not only from you, but from other patients saying, you know, meditation has never worked for me, but prayer is where I find that solace, where I find that support and where I get that peace, that inner peace, knowing that God is with me, knowing that I'm not alone, and having that moment kind of to themselves to find that inner wisdom, that inner guide, and that inner peace.

So however you get there, my advice is typically to lean into it, to not forget that that's there for you. And if you've had that practice, is there a way that you can make it work even better, serve you even more? Can you do it twice a day or can you be more consistent about doing it every day? Because, you know, what is the colloquialism, like that everyone in a foxhole knows God, right?

Peggy Sarlin

Right, no atheist in a foxhole.

Dr. Heather Sandison, N.D.

So, you know, you don't want to wait until that moment of desperation, you don't want to be in the foxhole. I really think that having that daily practice is what makes it most valuable, and I know I'm saying this to someone, you just said, like 10 minutes to go for a walk, like we don't have that, moments to pray, we don't have that, I hear that feedback, and yet, if there is a way to be with your loved one that you're caring for and pray together, if there's a way to kind of make it part of that daily routine in a way that doesn't create more stress, and more to do, and more on the list, and also to have the person you're caring for get the benefit.



Peggy Sarlin

I think what you said is so beautiful, and I did pray with my husband. You know, if you don't know what to say, you can read Psalms, Psalms are very comforting, some of them, not all of them, but some are very comforting. My husband loved Psalm 23, you know, the Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want, you know somehow that Psalm transcends everything. I don't know why it's so particularly magical, but it is. And so to read Psalms to your loved one, to pray together, if you don't feel you have the strength to do this, if you don't feel you have the courage to do it, you can pray for the strength, you can pray for the courage, you know? And when you pray, prayer stimulates happy hormones, like oxytocin, that inspire feelings of trust and belonging, you know, they dissipate the cortisol and they release the oxytocin.

So you know, you're changing within, actually there've been brain scans of people in prayer, and what's going on in their brain is there is the centers of self-reflection and self-soothing are lighting up, and the centers involved with taking action, planning to take action, they're quieting down. So you're getting away from, oh, but I got to call the doctor and go to the pharmacy, you know, and you're just in another place, a quieter place where you're being soothed. So I can't say enough about prayer, and prayer as a source of courage.

Dr. Heather Sandison, N.D.

And you also talked about singing and music as a source of, and again, we see this, you know, music has been used to renew memories we see this with our residents at Marama, that when we turn on Elvis or music from their time where they have memories, this will trigger stories, and they'll start to tell us about their lives, and ex-girlfriends, and all kinds of stories,

I absolutely love it. It's a really powerful to use music for brain function, and again, like you mentioned, I don't want to harp on all of the "bad neuro" like neurochemicals, whether it's hormones or neurotransmitters, the ones that are excitatory, you know, like glutamate and dopamine, and dopamine can be a little bit excitatory, but the histamines, and some of these things that are a little bit too excitatory that can triggering anxiety, they can also, you know, and cortisol, of course we talked about, but sometimes it's more fun to talk about what can we generate? Can we get more GABA? Can we get more serotonin? Can we get more of these things that help us to calm, and relax, and also stimulate new memories?



Peggy Sarlin

Yeah, I love what you said about the ex-girlfriend memory coming back from music. Music is unique, and I think you told me, but I think music is retained in the deepest part of the brain, so everything else can go and music is still there. Music has a very special power and as long as we're talking about prayer and you know, if you can join a church choir and sing, and get that community support, and the prayer, and the bonding, and the singing, you really have something, you know, going there.

But you brought up music, what happened to me after my husband had been living, he was in various hospitals for six months, and then he came home and I had 24/7 help here, it was totally chaotic, I called my home Downton Abbey, if you remember that, with all the people coming, 'cause you know, there was somebody living in my living room who was here 24/7, and then the physical therapist came, and the speech therapist, and the occupational therapist, and the nurse, and just people coming and going all day, total chaos constantly. And one day, I mean I remember the day, July 5th, 2014, I went for a walk on a Saturday night and I live in Manhattan, walked down Broadway and I left my husband with the aid, and I just started making up a song.

I just started making a song in real time. I should say, when I was first started out in life, I was a singer and songwriter, and I had a band, and that's what I was doing, and it was kind of fun, I had a fancy manager, all that stuff was fun, but I stopped doing it. I focused on a career as a writer and family life, and I really never thought about music again, honestly, I just stopped, you know, 'cause I wasn't relating to contemporary music very much so I just didn't think about it. But all of a sudden this song came out. What inspired it was, my husband, as I said, was 6'4", so when I would walk down the street with him, I knew where he was. I mean, he was there, he took up the space and I was walking down that street, and I felt so keenly that absence of his presence, that where is he? He's supposed to be right over here.

And I started writing a song in real time called "When Love Walked By My Side", And I came home to my husband and I said, I wrote a song, and I sang it to him and he just started wildly sobbing, you know, and it was the most incredible thing between us because it was something new and something beautiful. And the next day I woke up and I wrote another song, and I ran into his room, I wrote another song. Of course they were all about him. And then the next day I wrote another, I wrote another song, and then he would start every



morning and say, did you write a song? So it was like, I had to do it, you know? In that first summer I wrote 18 songs. So which I then took to create another life, I went on, I found an amazing musical director, pianist, I recorded two albums and quite a few singles, I began performing at a very nice clubs here in Manhattan, and just relating to people as a performer, and a singer, and a songwriter, totally different image than, when I walked down the street as a care giver and I ran into people, I knew they would look at me like, oh, how are you? When I walked down the street as a performer, they went, oh, when are you playing again? I said, I want to be that person, I want people to relate to me that way, I don't want to be the person they pity. So you may not be songwriter, but the act of going very deep inside yourself and finding creative inspiration, creative solace, it could be journaling, I think many people know about that, right? Do you recommend that?

Dr. Heather Sandison, N.D.

Yeah, absolutely. There's so many ways to create something original and it doesn't have to be, I love what you just shared, that brought me to tears thinking about you walking down Broadway, you know, missing him, and yet there's the beauty that came out of that, and that song, and music is a way that people can find kind of that common human experience can be shared and expressed. And that can happen through so many things, through writing, whether it's journaling, or even if nobody ever reads it, I'm sure there's a sense of catharsis as well. There's so much benefit in terms of connecting with others, relating to others, the way you're describing, and also just getting it out, it's almost like a detoxification, right?

Peggy Sarlin

It is. You take your pain and you somehow transcend it, you're somehow in it and out of it at the same time, you're inside it, but you're analyzing it, you're shaping it, you're mastering it, and that's what makes it so powerful. And anybody can do that, journaling, or you might want to paint or do watercolors, or you might want to knit a sweater for a new baby in the family, or make a beautiful card, you know, a special card for, you know, your son's birthday, or whatever it is, it doesn't have to be some grandiose thing where you're in a recording studio, anything where you're connecting with yourself and making something new that, that it's somehow will be healing, when I was writing songs, I literally could feel my brain lighting up.



Everything was happening, I was writing lyrics with my pen, so there was a hand thing here, there was the analysis, there was the unconscious playing around with it, there was the singing, singing lights up so many neural networks and releases dopamine, singing, so much was happening, I really feel it saved my life. It certainly saved my sanity, that's a fact.

Dr. Heather Sandison, N.D.

There's a couple of things that you mentioned that when is your identity, right, that identity shift from identifying as a caregiver or directly in your relationship, just to that person, right, whether it's a spouse or a child, whoever you are to that person that needs so much care.

If we're always her daughter, his daughter, his wife, you know, 'cause most of us are women, right, as caregivers, but you go into being that performer, that singer, that writer, that artist, that, you know, whatever it is that you're creating, your identity shifts, instead of being someone that people are dependent on to being somebody that's like giving to the world in this very unique way, and that can bring some peace and also something to look forward to, because right, there's a grief process when that person you're caring for is sort of starting to go in the direction of decline, if that's part of what's happening for you, you know, if your identity is so wrapped up in that person, then there's also this fear of what happens afterwards. And then when you have that other identity, there can be a lot of hope for the future that's there.

Peggy Sarlin

Yeah, there's something you're going towards, you know, and there's something new. But you know, I'm glad you talked about, you know, going forward and into the future, and what's the future going to be like? This topic was creativity, I want to return to courage. I think something I needed and probably most people listening need is you're going to need courage to look at the situation realistically and face it as it changes, and that takes a lot of courage. And after my husband was home for a year and a half, and I was barely functioning. I mean, I was, I don't know, there wasn't anything left really. And I made the very tough decision, he had to go to a nursing home, and now that was the hardest thing I ever had to do in my life, I hope I never have to do anything that hard again.



And it took courage, and it wasn't easy, and as other people are facing different situations, you know, there were family dynamics involved with that decision that were painful that have since been resolved, but they were painful. And, you know, any part of the courage is to look at the situation, maybe say, you know what, I can't do this anymore, we need to have a different arrangement or maybe say, you know what, I can't do this myself, I need to bring in an aid, but I don't have money, I'm going to go ask my sister for money, I've never asked her for anything, but I'm going to ask her now, you know? I'm just giving an example, I don't have a sister, I wish I did.

I'm just giving examples of the kind of things that take courage to do, but you know, your loved one's situation can't bring you down too, you have to be able to survive it. You have to be able to survive it and go on and make a life for yourself. And so, in fact, he did go into a nursing home, and really the only thing that kept me going was writing songs. I mean, that was my solace, I'd write a song and I go sing it to him in the nursing home, and he was actually very brilliant guy, so he would help me with the lyrics and we'd sit there and we work on the lyrics together and it was fun. We were having fun. And somehow it got me through, so I do want to suggest to people that you can be superman or superwoman for a while, but not forever, everybody has a breaking point. What do you think Dr. Sandison? I mean, you're offering people a break from their situation, you're offering them a change of situation.

Dr. Heather Sandison, N.D.

You know, I think that so much of that challenge of making that decision around nursing homes, and care, and bringing someone else in to the mix, there's like you mentioned, just so many dynamics within the family, financial dynamics, I mean, the list goes on, and on, and on. And when you're under that amount of stress, it's really hard, it's very challenging to make rational decisions that aren't influenced by sleep deprivation, and emotion, and everything that's in the mix here. And my hope, one of my many goals with creating Marama was to offer families an option that they felt really good about, right?

Peggy Sarlin

Right.



Dr. Heather Sandison, N.D.

That you know that your loved one is going to get exceptional care, that they're going to get really good food, that they're going to get the best that science has to offer in terms of what's going to support them, so that if there is any chance they can heal, they're getting it, they're getting that chance. And my hope is to reduce the suffering that dementia and neurodegenerative diseases as a whole really put on families, that just long goodbye, that long, awful road of these decisions, these awful decisions that you're forced to make. And that really there are, as you discovered in your work with "Awakening from Alzheimer's" and doing the research, there's a ton of resources out there, but they're very rarely packaged in one place,

Peggy Sarlin

Correct

Dr. Heather Sandison, N.D.

not well-organized. And your neurologist at your local hospital or in your local clinic is not going to give them to you.

Peggy Sarlin

No.

Dr. Heather Sandison, N.D.

And you have to work really hard in a time when life is already very hard to get the resources, to find the information. And my goal with Marama, of course, was to make that at this point right now easier, but also as baby boomers age, as we get our population ages, and many of them, you know, many of our seniors don't have children, don't have a living spouse, don't have people to rely on, you know, as a society, we really need to show up in a very different way. Like this is not functional. And so there needs to be new options and a new way of looking at our seniors. We need to reimagine what aging in place looks like, what our senior care facilities look like, you know, we're so obsessed with youth and youth culture, and really, I think all of that needs to be re-imagined. We need to look at how can we harness and get, what I believe is a very squandered resource, the wisdom and experience of our elders, we need to bring that back into the fold, and by doing that, by connecting our preschool students and young children with our elders, we get the benefits of both, right?



The elders can inspire the young children with their wisdom and experience, and those young children can inspire, there's nothing that lights up the face of an elderly person like a child. When we bought Marama and took over the facility, it was a hospice facility, and so bedridden residents who were on liquid diets, you know, at the very end of life, we are so honored to be a part of that transition for them. And I had a one-year-old at the time, so I would bring Nadia, my child, into the room and you'd hear one of the residents, I mean, she barely spoke, say, hey tiger, you know, she had called her tiger.

Peggy Sarlin

Tiger.

Dr. Heather Sandison, N.D.

And she said to me, you know, seeing the face of my child, she's like the best time in my life was raising my children,

Peggy Sarlin

Yeah.

Dr. Heather Sandison, N.D.

And she'd talk about that. And I mean, this is a fully demented, you know, full in the throes of dementia, and it would remind her of the highlights of her life, and so she was able to relive them and share them a little bit with me. And so, yeah, I think the realism, you talk about the realism and just facing this reality of your situation that you're in, and I want to just echo that from like a societal perspective. We need to face that, like what we've created here, it does not work, it does not serve us, not the next generation, not the current generation that's aging, like we need to find solutions to this now. And Marama is part of that, I hope, and yet we can't stop having the bigger conversation about how we can help others.

Peggy Sarlin

Well, as soon as I heard about Marama, I just said, this is it. This is what we've been waiting for, I mean, it is so obviously providing the service that needs to be provided. And for people who do have a loved one that they want to give this kind of all encompassing care to on such a high level, there now as an option that there wasn't before. So I wish you every success and may a thousand Maramas bloom, but I'll just finish the story, which really



doesn't have a happy ending. But just to conclude what happened, my husband lived in the nursing home for seven years, and those were actually, until last year or so ago, into last year, but they were good years.

I mean, there were ups and downs and he'd have seizures and go to, but they were good years, we had an aid, he'd take him out for lunch, we would meet for lunch, he'd go to his favorite Italian restaurant, and everybody knew him, they were nice. He went out to the theater, he went to the movies, he had somebody to come in and study religious texts with him, his brothers came and took them out. I mean, I made sure that every day there was an activity for him, plus his nursing home is run by the archdiocese of New York, and they were warm, and lovely, and caring people. And so it was a good experience in as much as an experience can be good, and it was good for me.

So I want to talk to the caregivers. I'd be dead, I mean, I know it, I could not have survived that level that I was on, nobody could. I went on, I had a very good life, I mean, because he was being taken care of, I got to work on "Awakening from Alzheimer's" and create the video series and do "Regain Your Brain", and record two albums, and perform, and go on vacation, and I got to recover. I cared for him constantly, I mean, he was a well-tended. So it worked, it was the best situation that could be given the circumstances. And so I want everybody to feel that they can make the best of it if they rearrange it. The last year was COVID, the nursing home was locked down, I couldn't see my husband.

Unfortunately, the governor signed an order forcing end COVID patients into the nursing home and created total, total chaos, and we had to live through that. My husband did get COVID, but we managed to get him to the hospital, they gave him hydroxy chloroquine, and he survived, so he went back and was locked down. But the lockdown eventually killed him, because what happened is, you know, when you have COVID, you're kind of wasting away, you don't have an appetite, you need somebody to feed you, you need somebody to, you know, nobody could be with him. You know, I would go there and drop off foods for him, but he needed me to sit there and put it in his mouth.

And he just got weaker and weaker, and he passed away this January. So that chapter has come to a close. I should say, I hadn't planned to say this, but it's just occurring to me now, one advantage of having courage and one advantage of praying is that you're doing everything to the maximum, your taking care of your loved one, there's no guilt, and so now



my husband has passed, I have no guilt. I mean, I miss him terribly, but I'm completely at peace because I know I did absolutely everything for him. And it's not just that I have no guilt, I have pride, I have self-respect, I carried this heavy burden and I never gave up. The day before he died, because I couldn't see him, I was reading him Sherlock Holmes stories on FaceTime, Monday night, before he died, I finished reading him "A Scandal in Bohemia", and the next day we were going to start "The Red-Headed League", but he passed away that morning.

So I know till the last day of his life, I was doing everything. It's very freeing. It's very freeing. Oh, that's one other thing I wanted to say, which is that, everybody needs a sense of purpose in life, right? I mean, we all do. And you might have your sense of purpose, all the things you've been doing before your loved one got sick, you know, you have your career, you're taking care of other family members, you know, whatever it may be, community, volunteering, you have your purpose in life, developing your own talents. Now it's all about this, and so I learned to redefine what my purpose was. And I would say like, at the end of the day, I'd say, did you give love today? Okay, then it was a good day. So my purpose in life became to give love, not to, you know, write a best-selling or, you know, go have a wonderful vacation in Bermuda, or whatever it may be. My purpose was to give love, and that no matter how difficult the day was, if I gave love, it was a good day.

And so I just think, you know, I just say, all caregivers are giving and you should just be so proud of yourself, you should have so more self-respect, and whatever the situation, however it resolves, carry it with you that you know you did your best, you know how strong you are, you know that you're somebody to contend with, you know?

Dr. Heather Sandison, N.D.

Yeah, you're doing the heavy lifting of society in that role, big time. And I just love hearing your story. Thank you so much for the courage to share it. I know it's not always easy to express these very challenging, challenging times, and especially with how fresh the loss of your husband is. Thank you for sharing that. I know that this will be so inspirational for so many of our listeners and attendees, hearing your story and knowing that, you know, not all stories are going to be identical, but that you have the freedom to choose, and that we are here to support you in whatever balance looks like for you, and whatever that courage means for you, and whatever creativity looks like for you, that these are tools that you can use to get through a challenging time, and you're up for it.



Peggy Sarlin

You're up for it, you've got it, you've got the right stuff, you've got courage, right? You got that, you got everything.

Dr. Heather Sandison, N.D.

And just being clear that reaching out, getting the resources, getting the information, that if you are even here, like that tells me that you have it in you to look for solutions, that you're not going to just take this one, you're going to fight back a little bit and make the most of a very challenging situation. So thank you to all of the caregivers who are showing up for people in need, you are really, really doing God's work, and we are so grateful for you.

Peggy Sarlin

And I feel just the same. I feel just the same, you know, from the deepest part of my heart and soul, that's how I feel, you know, and I just want to say, that's what I wanted to communicate in songwriting. My first album is called "Friends and Family", because we didn't discuss gratitude, and maybe that would be a good thing kind of to go at, you know, prayer puts you in a state of gratitude and gratitude actually changes your brain, that's what Dr. David Perlmutter told me. So do you want to be in a state of, oh, why does everything happen to me? Or do you want to be in a state of oh, I'm so grateful that I got through today, I'm so grateful somebody, a friend called and checked in, and asked what I needed, I'm so grateful for, you know, that my husband, you know, had a good time, whatever it is?

And so I really, really wanted to write a song expressing gratitude, which I eventually did call "Friends and Family", and you can find a video of it on YouTube and you can find my album, but I was just filled with this feeling of everybody's going through tough times, whatever they may be, and it's soul to soul, you know, I understand it better, and maybe they understand me better now because nobody gets through this world without some pretty intense pain along the way, you know? So let's be grateful for what we've got.

Dr. Heather Sandison, N.D.

I'm so inspired by everything you've shared to transform that pain and those struggles into creative, new inspiration for others. It's just really, really beautiful, Peggy, thank you so much.



Peggy Sarlin

Thank you, Dr. Sandison. Thank you for bringing new paradigms to people with Alzheimer's, to new ways of healing, new possibilities for families to get on top of this thing, I mean, I just, go, go, go, do, do, do.

Dr. Heather Sandison, N.D.

Thank you. To find out more about you if they want to purchase your book, "Awakening from Alzheimer's" or "Regain Your Brain", where can they get that or find out more?

Peggy Sarlin

I think there's going to be a link to the video series and you can go to my website, Peggysarlin.com and you'll find my music there, and the book, which was updated in 2016, the book is available on Amazon. So I hope you do look into it, there's a lot of valuable information.

Dr. Heather Sandison, N.D.

Tons, tons, I've got a copy myself. Peggy, thank you again for being with us and for sharing your story.

Peggy Sarlin

My pleasure.