TAKE CARE:
TALES, TIPS AND TOUGH LOVE FROM WOMEN CAREGIVERS

A proposal and guidelines for an open-call anthology

Women have always been caregivers. Whether looking after small children, elders, other family members or friends in small communities, tending to others in urban settings with limited support systems, or acting as professional caregivers in institutional settings, we have been the primary providers of physical care and emotional support in a variety of settings and circumstances throughout the ages.

Today that remains true and being the main caregiver may be more vital than ever. As women have children later and elders live longer, we are challenged by competing demands and shrinking resources. Many of us have elderly parents living (perhaps with us) in a time of growing dementia or increasing frailty; others have parents who need supervision in nursing homes of dubious quality. At the same time, we are parenting children who quite often have their own physical or mental health challenges. We may also have spouses in failing health who need our attention. And who among us would not be there for an ill friend or family member?

Whether we are younger women focused on caring for our children, older women charged with “being there” for a sick spouse or parent, or women in-between those two stages of life who are called upon to take care of others, many of us find ourselves in the caregiver role, well before we expected to be there and often feeling less prepared than we wish.

- How are we handling that responsibility, often alone and/or with professional demands as well?
- Who are we taking care of, why, and what does the situation demand of us?
- How do we cope with fear, fatigue, frustration?
- Who do we call upon for support?
- How do we find respite?
- What experiences have we had that might help others?
- What are the biggest challenges we’ve faced and how have they been addressed?
- What has made us laugh about the situation and what has that taught us?

These are some of the questions this anthology aims to explore for the purpose of providing support to women caregivers. Submissions may be poignant, humorous, instructive or simply supportive; but they will all be true first person accounts of surviving successfully as competent caregivers.

The structure of the book (i.e., chapters) will emerge from submissions deemed suitable for inclusion. While the book’s target audience is women as primary caregivers, we hope to include a special chapter that shares men’s experience as caregivers too.
In addition to providing invaluable support to the primary audience of women (and men) as caregivers, this book will appeal to a variety of health providers and allied health care professionals (e.g., social workers, long term care administrators, hospice workers, etc.) as well as a general readership. As far as we know, no other anthology exists with care-giving as its focus. Thus, this could reasonably be called a groundbreaking book that addresses a growing need.

About the editor:

Elayne Clift, M.A. is an award-winning writer and journalist as well as an educator and a specialist in gender issues and health communications. Her creative as well as academic work has been widely published internationally and she has conceived and edited several successful anthologies, including *Women's Encounters with the Mental Health Establishment: Escaping the Yellow Wallpaper* (Haworth Press, 2002) and *Women, Philanthropy and Social Change: Visions for a Just Society* (UPNE/Tufts U. Press, 2005) Her latest non-fiction book (with Christine Morton, Ph.D.) is *Birth Ambassadors: Doulas and the Re-emergence of Woman-supported Birth in America* (Praeclarus Press, 2014). In 2012 her novel *Hester’s Daughters* (based on *The Scarlet Letter*) appeared and in 2014 she received First Prize/Fiction from Greyden Press for *Children of the Chalet: New and Selected Stories* (Greyden Press, 2015). A doula and former Hospice volunteer, she served as consumer advocate on the Vermont State Nursing Board for six years.

Guidelines:

For a possible anthology on women as caregivers (contingent on sufficient quality material and publisher interest), I am seeking submissions from women of all ages caring for kids, parents, friends, family. Submissions must be true 1st P. tales, tips, encouragement, lessons (serious and humorous). 2500 w. max. Double-spaced, 12 Pt. Times New Roman, MSWord only. Include word count, all contact info and brief bio (50 w. max). Reprints acceptable with attribution if author owns rights or secures publisher permission. Submissions or inquiries: eclift@vermontel.net.

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