



For Today's Woman:

**5 Tips For
Assertiveness
Development**

BY

Patricia Ogilvie

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Published by:

**Prorisk Enterprises Ltd.
Box 253, Alberta Beach, AB, Canada T0E 0A0
Website PatriciaOgilvie.com**

Patricia's Story:

Little did I know that intermingled throughout my activities of running a successful business, caring for a home and husband, travelling, and living as "today's modern" woman - my mother would become an integral part of my lifestyle for what I now finally accepted as the rest of *her* life.

I didn't ask for it. It just sort of fell into my lap, unannounced one day shortly after my father's death. She had a heart attack; then a stroke, which incapacitated her mental and physical activities to a basic lifestyle. She was mostly OK, needed us to visit and handle a few things, nothing too stressful.

What came unexpectedly, however, was actually a gradual process of declining health. She needed more help. Her medications were causing light-headedness, she began falling more often, and her body was failing her, inside and out.

The last fall landed her into the hospital with broken ribs and an injured back. She couldn't walk and even after a lengthy recovery, she could not handle everyday life without some type of assistance.

She is passed now, and even though I was filled with extra duties, today she leaves a hole in my heart and my life.

What I didn't realize, was spending that time helping her as the primary caregiver, I hurt my emotional and physical self more than I realized.

We were co-dependent and when I realized this, I was frightened.

I anguished mentally for 10 years worried about my mother's well-being. And I hurt myself physically every time I helped her in and out of a bath, or up and down stairs. I didn't know any better and after one particular incident, I couldn't move my arm for four days. That scared me.

Yes, 10 years. I was angry, put out, interrupted, and did I say angry? Not so much because I had to drop everything when mom had an appointment, or when she was rushed into the hospital, or needed bills paid and items purchased. I was angry because I couldn't accept that she became dependent on me.

Introduction

Your story is different. The dice rolls and falls uniquely for each son or daughter's family.

You may not have a parent to care for, you may have your own children and partner.

Either way, when someone unexpectedly needs a lot more attention than you thought, life gets rocky.

My goal is to help you create well being where you are and to help you transition peacefully to where you want to be.

Together, we can work through this new stage in your life, your expectations of self, address other's expectations of us and celebrate each small win.

So let's get started.

Research shows that today, the two top reasons why adult children end up in the caregiver role is because their loved one suffers from injury or some type of brain impairment like Alzheimer's Disease or type of dementia.

One out of four U.S. households provides caregiving. According to the American Society on Aging:

- Nearly one out of every four U.S. households—roughly 22 million—provide caregiver services to a relative or friend over 50.
- 40 percent of caregivers are also raising children.
- 64 percent work either full- or part-time.

Caregiving has no defined role. Caregiving is simply being available to your parents or other loved ones and supporting them in a variety of needs.

Do you do anything for your loved one that takes care of some need?

If you answered yes, then you are a caregiver.

In fact, if you take time to go over to your loved one's home to cut the lawn or pick up mail, you are a caregiver.

And whether they move in with you, or you visit them in a nursing home, their own home, or whether you're living in their home, the role can be challenging mentally, physically, socially and emotionally. Most often, it is a long-term commitment.

And then, there is your own family. Your children, partner and spouse have demands.

Are you feeling stressed, emotional, exhausted and confused about what to do next?

A woman's stress can increase with the bouncing back and forth between the care receiver's gratitude for the care and their resentment due to life's changing circumstances. This can be compounded by the emotions that arise in the caregiver in attempting to cope with the changes of parent-child relationship, care receiver's needs and increased demands on time and resources required to meet the various needs.

As women, we can experience burnout as a result of being overworked, overstressed and the feeling that we need help but don't know where to turn or what to do next.

Here are some practical solutions to common issues women who give much of themselves experience. These could help you recognize when you might be leaning off balance and get back on track.

Here are 5 tips to help when you cross that fine line from grateful for having the care receiver in your life.

Caring is from the heart. And sometimes the heart could use a helping idea. So keep reading to find out more.

5 Strategies for Finding the Right Balance For Today's Overloaded Woman

Patricia shares:

"I can't believe your mom phoned so early! You don't think that's a bit annoying?" my husband asked.

When I told him I did not, and was happy mom had called, he looked at me quizzically.

I explained that even though my role was thrust upon us both without much warning, I decided not to slide down into those feelings of overwhelm, anxiety, sadness, trepidation, frustration and resentment like I used to in the past. In fact my husband remembers how I would cry and worry about mom.

Mom's call at 5 am was one of those rare moments when she wanted to chat and had something on her mind. I wanted my mom to call me because for the most part, I was the one who was constantly phoning her.

So this was a nice welcome.

Caring can seem like being on call 24/7.

You don't have someone to switch shifts with when you're too busy. You don't get to log off like in a job that exists only between 9:00 and 5:00. Prepare to change how you experience your schedule. Once you get used to it, get ready for it to shift again!

Are you feeling the pressure of trying to be all things to everybody? I recommend that you resolve right here and now, to make a commitment to yourself and your own care.

I encourage you to make the decision that you will do what it takes to experience more peace, joy, reward and balance in your life while taking care of your loved ones.

You can do it! And I'm going to help you do it.

Who am I to talk about balance while caregiving?

My name is Patricia Ogilvie and as a happily married, working woman who runs a coaching and writing business, I have studied and certified as an assertiveness coach and energy reader.

Over the past few years, I had the opportunity to balance busy entrepreneurial roles, family responsibilities and adjust to the demands that come with caregiving in a way that made me feel happy, content and proud. And those aspects include being available to our aging and care needing parents, children, and spouses.

I am a caring daughter who also cares about you.

I put these tips and ideas together to help you adjust to the major changes in your life that caregiving brings. I hope to help you create a happier, healthier lifestyle.

I discovered that one of the more difficult concepts to grasp as a caregiver, was to realize is that "9:00 to 5:00" as you know it, no longer applied. By giving yourself the flexibility to allow calls, doctors' appointments, hospital calls, at all hours of the day or night, you are actually better able to enjoy both your work and your family even more because you have peace of mind knowing where things stand with your loved one.

This may sound counter-intuitive but by considering the following five simple steps, you will find ways to feel more in control amidst life's challenges and disruptions.

Creating Caring Woman *Balance Step One:* Define what a balanced life means to you.

A. How to have more peace of mind when you release the need to control everything.

Many people think that having a balanced life means spending the same number of hours on work, on caregiving, as you do on personal activities. This could be a big mistake, because most of the time it just is not realistic.

Here is where you can establish the groundwork for your role so that you can adequately make the necessary decisions.

B. How to define what will work for you and take into consideration that life is constantly changing.

The right balance for you today may not be the right balance for you tomorrow or next week or next month, because over time your priorities change as well as your cared for loved ones. The one constant during all the change, is knowing you could have a peaceful, balanced life with the feeling of accomplishment and happiness you enjoy every day.

Does this sound like a "live in the moment" strategy? Well it is to some degree. It is about being mindful and focussed on what's in front of you instead of worrying about the past or the future. Staying mentally, in the present moment has a soothing effect - you actually feel more energized.

C. How to change your mind about your availability.

What I'm suggesting is you change your mind about how much time you "have" to allot to caregiving. Talk with everyone involved from your loved ones to your siblings and other family members and ask for help. Reach out to the agencies that are and will continue helping.

Despite your best efforts and intentions, at this stage of the life cycle anticipate problems in increasing frequency and plan for how you will remain calm to address them.

Set a clear picture that when problems start occurring and in whatever frequency that you remain calm – you are mentally prepared to go into solution.

**Creating Caring Woman Balance Step Two:
Know Your Limits and Create Boundaries**

Patricia shares:

Some people may agree with my husband that receiving a phone call at 5 a.m. is annoying, but most of you totally understand.

The way we look at it is that our parents are people who are important in our lives.

Besides, the last time I spoke with my mom, I distinctly suggested she call me anytime. So why shouldn't she call?

So what I really did was make the decision at that time to take her calls, anytime!

I created the boundary to expand phone call hours. It happened to be a good time for her and let's face it, if she had called later, I would have been in the shower, or gone. Then I would have wondered if mom called, why she didn't leave a message, when she did call, and what she wanted.

This way, all was handled immediately and this didn't stress anyone out at all.

I was then able to handle my mom's request at the lodge earlier in the day when the Manager was available, and the rest of my day flowed effortlessly and happily.

What's realistic to you when to take phone calls? What would work best for you and the situations that arise with your loved one?

For me, the flexibility to catch the Manager and get my mom's needs handled in the moment proved to be valuable to me, to mom and to the Lodge Manager.

Creating Caring Woman *Balance Step Three:* Put yourself first and learn how to say either "No" or "Not At This Time".

No one wants to say no to their loved ones. To achieve balance, you will probably need to do it once in a while. It is OK to keep some time for yourself; in fact it is necessary for everyone's best interest.

We all have the same 24 hours in a day. And we cannot possibly do everything that we want to do AND everything that everyone else wants us to do. So a big part of leading a more balanced life is to cut down on unnecessary tasks and protect your priorities.

When requests or conflicts of priority are set before you, ask yourself: “Is this going to give me a feeling of accomplishment and a feeling of happiness? Will this help me to reach my goals? Will this help me to balance?”

Coming to terms with saying “no” periodically and the repercussions of what the extended family would say about such selfishness was something to work to put into perspective. There are always going to be those in your life, well intentioned and other wise, who will judge you for not doing enough, early enough or the way they think you should do it.

Keep in mind that you know what you do and why, what is realistic for you and what isn’t, what can wait for tomorrow or next week and why you made your decisions to do things a certain way. Let this guide you and bring you peace when you can’t be all things to all people.

Creating Caring Woman *Balance Step Four:* Keep a Journal.

Making a difference in someone's life, like your parent, can be incredibly satisfying. The role can also be tiring, emotionally draining and nerve wracking at times.

So how can you shift from feeling tired to a rewarding experience?

One way to make your and your loved one's life better is to understand what you're doing, what's working, and what isn't. And there are far too many things going on in our lives to try to keep it all in our heads.

If you're running around trying to stay on top of all the things you're supposed to do, try keeping a journal. Write down what you spend time on - everything from your exercise routine, to the appointments you schedule for your loved one as well as your own.

Keeping a journal/log will help you see if you are spending your time in the most productive way. It will help remind you of your plans, your activities, and your commitments.

You'll instantly realize how much time you are spending caring for others and how much for your own duties.

Just to clarify, no task is too insignificant not to be documented. You see, it's not always medical chores that define yourself as a woman. It's the basic life tasks that can and do take up more time. So write it down.

Logging where your time goes is a great way to see what is eating up your time, and where you might consider looking for/asking for help.

Whether on paper or on the computer, getting some of it off your "plate" and onto paper may allow you to breathe easier.

Creating Caring Woman *Balance Step Five:*
Gratitude: What does gratitude have to do with being peaceful, in balance and a caregiver? Where do you focus your time and attention? There are ways you can learn to find joy in the quiet and chaotic moments.

Where are you putting the majority of your attention? Is it on your loved one or is it on maintaining your own balance?

If I were being totally honest here, what I am saying is this. Try to stop focussing on the role of caring for others and focus instead on feeling gratitude moment by moment.

Sound odd? This may be the most important step you will take to create balance and add more joy to your role as a caring woman and to yourself as a lifestyle. When you find ways to be grateful, appreciate what you are doing and need to do, you will find that each moment flows easier and with less effort.

When you focus on gratitude instead of the functions of the role, you experience yourself in a way that knows no bounds.

A way to experience more gratitude is to appreciate who you are and what you do – no matter how small or large the task!

Before your loved one needed your help cleaning, paying bills, packing overnight bags, driving to appointments, you were probably travelling more, took more vacations, registered into classes for yourself, and did all sorts of personal activities.

Soon your lifestyle changed. You moved closer or you moved your loved one in. In some way, you decided you had help out.

But know this. You chose to get involved. This is critical to acknowledge. How much to help is ultimately your choice.

It took me years to accept that helping my mom was OK with me. It took me a long time to accept that my lifestyle changed. But the moment I decided to become grateful for how everything shifted, where once I was filled with a multitude of contracts taking every moment of my time, now, fewer and larger paying contracts come to me instead. In fact my income increased as my time and flexibility increased. It seemed providence moved the universe to support me in the conscious shift I made.

If you're already feeling grateful, then when you do visit you're your loved one, you experience them differently. You experience them in a caring, loving, accepting, grateful space instead of overwhelm.

Be in the moment wherever you are and whatever you are doing. This softens those feelings of overwhelm when you are helping mom, dad, loved ones. Suddenly it doesn't seem like it's taking over your life.

You could sit back, enjoy your leisure and expresses how grateful you are for the change in your lifestyle. How do you know that's not how you'd feel if you don't try it?

This goes for work, too. You may have a dozen projects on your plate, and only so much time to complete them. Don't get down on yourself for letting your loved one down, or if one of your home chores is left undone, or you shorten a trip so you can care for your ailing grandmother.

When you look at it from a place of gratitude, the entire experience radiates joy. And when you radiate joy, others feel it.

Figuring out what kind of balance is right for you, creating boundaries, picking priorities, and knowing what's working and what isn't, feeling grateful for your lot in caregiving life- will help you feel more peaceful and confident in your role as a caring woman.

Summary: The Balancing Act That's All Up to You

People ask me all the time how I run a successful company, care for pets, a husband, travel all around the world, manage my own household AND care for others in a big way.

Essentially, they want to know how I create and maintain balance in my life.

In my experience, it's that energetic focus. It could be easy or difficult. The truth is, you have to decide for yourself. You just need to (1) have the right attitude, (2) make educated choices, (3) take care of yourself and (4) ask for help.

Having the Right Attitude

Attitude can make or break a company, a church, a home. And we have a choice, every day, regarding the attitude we will embrace.

An attitude of assertiveness to stand up for oneself is the key.

You've met them. Your friend, colleague or family member, has a good job, beautiful, healthy kids, supportive partner.

You would think she considers herself to be extremely fortunate. Yet every time you see her and ask about her family, she starts in about how hard it is to run a home, a family AND tend to an ailing, overbearing, demanding parent. Not only that, she complains about how much more successful she would be if she did not have to take her parent to appointments, and stay up for hours and hours in the hospital waiting room when he fell and broke his wrist.

Yikes – can you sense the energy around this attitude? That is exhausting. It's not pleasant even if you have nothing to do with this person.

I have never looked at my parents' aging as a hardship. But the changes didn't come easy to accept. Caring was a privilege for me to be a part of their lives and build our lives together. I am grateful and feel so much better at everything we did because of them. I can honestly say I am a better leader, better manager, better multi-

tasker, and better negotiator. What a privilege to be able to provide care and make a difference in their lives.

But this positive attitude is not something that magically happens. I mentioned earlier, it took me a better part of 10 years to finally accept how things were.

When mother went once again into the hospital from a choking incident, she lay in that bed for over a week, drawn, pale, sallow coloured and ready to die. That single experience helped me understand what is really important and what is not. It helped me learn not to sweat the small stuff and not to get upset about things I have no control over. I realized then how grateful I was for her having raised me, educated me, loved me. And all she wanted was the dignity, respect and love back.

Mom's gone now.

Puts it into perspective, but we don't get those moments back and the time wasted worrying about what we can't control is precious time we could be actively involved in our parent's life. Turning our attention from how much harder it is to juggle everything and still live our own life, to "I can do this and I'm going to figure out how" is pivotal in creating a grateful experience.

Tapping into a support system for when it seems too much is also most useful. Spend time with people who focus on the positive to keep your energy and spirits up.

And that brings us to the next point...

Making the Right Choices for you and each situation

We all have to make hundreds of choices every day. It starts first thing when we wake. Do we crawl out of bed grumbling or open our eyes and smile with gladness of what the new day may bring?

As the day goes along, our decisions may get more complicated and difficult to make. For example, Monday, Mom calls and wants you to pick her up for an appointment she made for Wednesday. "What time will you pick me up?" she asks.

Wednesday! You have a meeting with an important client. How can she do this? How about calling you first and checking if you're free to take her? Would that have been so difficult?

Apparently yes. She doesn't realize that life goes on for other people like her "working" daughter.

Step back, take a breath and evaluate the best step to take next. You are the only one who can decide what the right decision will be.

I had this experience with my mom. My husband encouraged me to go to the meeting. He assured me that he could handle the appointment with mom. And, of course, I knew he could. But that was not the point. I told him that my mother, in the physical shape she was in, was probably only going to see an eye specialist who has a very long waiting list.

And I wanted to be there for that session because later, mom wouldn't be able to share what the doctor told her and what the next step would be.

My husband told me to think about it for a few days to make sure I was making the right decision. So I did. I thought about what would happen if I missed that appointment. I thought about that she was frail and needed her eyes looked at. She was, incidentally having great difficulty reading. I thought about how the next appointment couldn't be set up for at least 4 months. I also thought about the business consequences of missing the meeting.

To help make this decision, I applied what I had learned years earlier from a business colleague: two-two-two rule. I asked myself, "What will be the impact on both sides two weeks from now, two months from now, and two years from now?"

If I missed mom's appointment, would she be upset with me in two weeks? Would she still be upset in two months? And would the disappointment continue to echo in all of our hearts and minds in two years? I knew the answer was yes because I knew my mom and I knew that possibly, she might not even be with us in two years.

But I couldn't just ignore this meeting. So I went through the same process. I figured that this particular client would understand my situation and reschedule. I knew that the reschedule would not affect the outcome of the project nor would they hold it against me in two weeks, after two months... and that none of the rescheduling would affect our relationship after two years.

Guess what I decided to do? I skipped the meeting and took mom to her appointment. And four months later, mom reminds me what a wonderful daughter I am and she so appreciates how I help out. She tears up when she says this. I tear up knowing in my heart, I appreciate her and want her life to be as comfortable as it can be.

Take Care of Yourself

You can't take care of others if you are not taking care of yourself.

So far, we've discussed journaling to check how much time you are spending on your needs compared to your loved one.

Now you know how much time you're taking for yourself.

Build in time for rest, relaxation, nutrition, fitness, spirituality. Do some research and find out which foods are more nutritious and still easy to prepare.

Do not lift or carry beyond your physical limits. Do find a workout that will help you stay in shape. Check out your local neighbourhood for low cost places you can workout. You don't always have to stay home and work out. And if your budget seems stretched, there are places like parks, local schools, nature areas that are ideal for getting away and stretching!

Tap into sources of emotional support. Acknowledge your feelings. It's important to learn to overcome daily obstacles that sometimes derail you from your being your personal best. If you don't handle negativity on a daily basis, you could jeopardize your relationship with your loved one and more importantly with yourself. Not handling how you feel could from time to time carry into a mild depression all the way to extreme depression. Things that can trigger depression can be the added responsibilities of handling your loved one, your finances, loss of control and so much more.

It's being assertive.

I suggest that you find resources (and I'm adding many in my upcoming ebook) to eliminate stress and anxiety. Many caring women worry too much about things that they can't do anything about. Start to become aware of those things that you can do something about and let the rest go.

Educate yourself on available resources and sources of support – “Ask For Help”

Take time to learn about your loved one's health challenges, needs and limitations.

There are numerous resources available for caring for elders if we take a moment to find them. Family and extended family members are exceptional resources. Your doctor may be able to recommend specialists, health care and home care professionals in your area. Tap into in-home care for hygiene, safety, health care and nutrition. Learn the best ways to talk with medical staff. Get to know the neighbours.

Accept help when offered and seek out help. I'm fortunate that I have siblings I can rely on to take on responsibilities and this helps so much.

And I'm truly grateful that I have a partner and friends who understand that our love for our parents is important and valued.

Be realistic about what you can do and where you need help. It is OK to share the load. Look for ways to feel blessed and grateful for all the support you have in your life. Start taking advantage of your resources...

Build connections with helpful people in your community and spend time with positive people.

For additional information, visit my website articles at www.auntisays.com You can **THRIVE**. [Start today.](#)

Plus, I'm offering one-on-one coaching. Find out on my website today.