

Getting Untangled

A recent news article told the story of a humpback whale that had become entangled in a spider web of crab traps and lines. She was weighed down by hundreds of pounds of traps that caused her to struggle to stay afloat. She also had hundreds of yards of line rope wrapped around her body, tail and torso as well as a line tugging at her mouth.

A fisherman spotted her and radioed an environmental group for help. Within a few hours, the rescue team arrived and determined that she was so badly off; the only way to save her was to dive in and untangle her. This could have been very dangerous as one slap of her tail could kill a human at that close range.

Undaunted, the divers went ahead and worked for hours in their attempt to free her. When she was free, the divers said the whale swam in what seemed like joyous circles. She then came back to each diver and nudged them gently as if to say, "thank you". The diver who cut the rope out of her mouth said that her eye was following him the whole time and he will never be the same.

This story makes us think of how we all need untangling at times. We need our friends and loved ones to come and help us when we can't repair things ourselves. Or, we need to call in others, like a coach or helper, to make a difference. To me, it doesn't matter how a person gets untangled, only that they do. If you're tangled up, call out for help. As the whale found out, there are lots of people only to glad to provide assistance.

Sometimes caregivers need help to become untangled when their responsibilities seem overwhelming. As a caregiver, if you are feeling sad, lonely, irritable, tired, have a loss of appetite, are unable to get out, do not have time for yourself or don't feel like socializing then it is time to ask for help. Asking for assistance is a sign of strength, not a sign of weakness.

If you are a family member or friend of a caregiver and you are witnessing these signs, please talk to the person and ask what would help them but try to resist jumping in with solutions. If the caregiver is so overwhelmed that they can't think of what will help, here are some ideas you can suggest:

- Offer to give the caregiver a break by staying with the loved one for a specified period of time so they can do something for themselves
- Invite the caregiver to go out for lunch or other social event
- Offer specific help such as shopping, yard work, transportation or meal preparation
- Offer to find out information about services that could help them
- Be supportive of decisions the caregiver makes
- Listen (this is likely the most important thing you can do for a caregiver)