



Tools for Caring

# Meaning

— NOTICING WONDER

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**In the 1960's, John F. Kennedy went for a tour of the Kennedy Space Centre. During his time there, he encountered a janitor who was busy mopping the floor and he stopped to ask him, "What do you do here at NASA?" The man replied, "I am putting man on the moon."**

It matters why you do what you do. It matters how you use the moments of your life. It matters the meaning you give to your tasks. Meaning is how you make sense of what is important to you.

### **How do you make sense of being a caregiver?**

Being a caregiver is a shared way of life. Much of "yours" becomes "ours" or "theirs" and "theirs" becomes "yours" too. Meaning is a shared experience. You are sharing in what matters by connecting with who it matters for. The meaning you create depends on what matters to you and what matters to the person you support. It is collective. It is about sharing a moment, an emotion, a meal, a good cry, a practice - together. The person you support matters to you, so sharing in an experience that matters to them makes it matter to you too. You are mattering to one another and from that there is meaning. Making sense of what is important.

You know how this works. You have likely done it before. You have shared a special moment with the person you support that has become a memory. I bet you can recall it right now. I'll always treasure the first time we made a meal at Michelle's - French onion soup. When it was time to sit and enjoy, Michelle took her first bite, "mmmmmmmm" and silence was all that I could hear in the space. Her eyes rolled back, and she savoured. How long had it been since she enjoyed one of her favourite meals cooked in her kitchen? We enjoyed great conversation that evening, and most of it centered around the soup. We created a meaningful moment, a lasting memory - our shared experience. Our noticing wonders.

In positive psychology we say Brains like People like us. When you are in the presence of another person for the first time, your brain wants to know that this person is safe and can be trusted. Your brain looks for something in common with that other person. Think back to the questions that are often around in first time conversations. We converse about our roles, our livelihoods, our relatives and friends, our hobbies and interests scanning for something we share. For Michelle and I, our shared experience was built upon a shared value and a shared interest. We both love cooking and we both enjoy food over conversation. That evening was so meaningful that it created a practice. We started planning meals to make and share in Michelle's kitchen.



**What are some shared experiences that have created meaningful memories for you and the person you support?**

**What wonders did you notice were happening when you recall that memory?**





## Your Meaning Journey: Here is where you learn to use your wonder goggles.

### MEANING ASSESSMENT

#### How would you rate your current meaning in life?

Michael Steger's MLQ (Meaning in Life Questionnaire; Steger et al., 2006)

Please take a moment to think about what makes your life feel important to you. Please respond to the following statements as truthfully and accurately as you can, and also please remember that these are very subjective questions and that there are no right or wrong answers. Please answer according to the scale below.

Absolutely Untrue 1	Mostly Untrue 2	Somewhat Untrue 3	Can't Say True or False 4	Somewhat True 5	Mostly True 6	Absolutely True 7
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- \_\_\_\_\_ I understand my life's meaning.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I am looking for something that makes my life feel meaningful.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I am always looking to find my life's purpose.
- \_\_\_\_\_ My life has a clear sense of purpose.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I have a good sense of what makes my life meaningful.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I have discovered a satisfying life purpose.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I am always searching for something that makes my life feel significant.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I am seeing a purpose or mission for my life.
- \_\_\_\_\_ My life has no clear purpose.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I am searching for meaning in my life.

# Meaning Experiences

Here are a few suggested activities to help you explore the layers of meaning.

- 1. Put on your Wonder Goggles.** Think of a past memory that matters to you. With your wonder goggles, what did you notice? Consider sharing your memory with the person you support whether it includes them or not. What do you notice?

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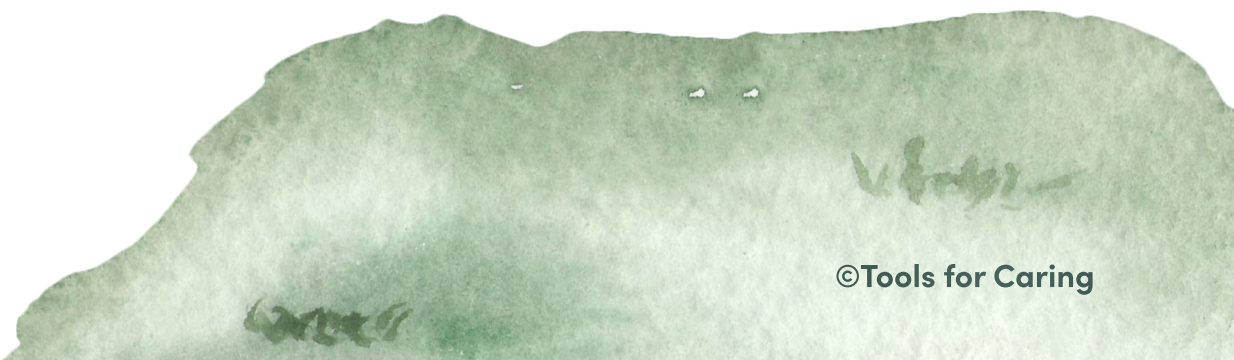
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**2. Noticing Wonders.** Start by making a list of what matters to you and what matters to the person you support. Explore areas such as values, interests or experiences. Once you have done that look for a similarity. What matters to both of us?

What matters to me?	What matters to us?	What matters to them?

Next create a shared experience with the person you are caring for. You may decide to go for a walk, attend an event, explore something new, learn a language, cook a meal, whatever will be something you share in, together. Noticing wonders starts with finding a shared moment. Notice what matters to the person receiving care.

**What do you notice about the shared moment?**

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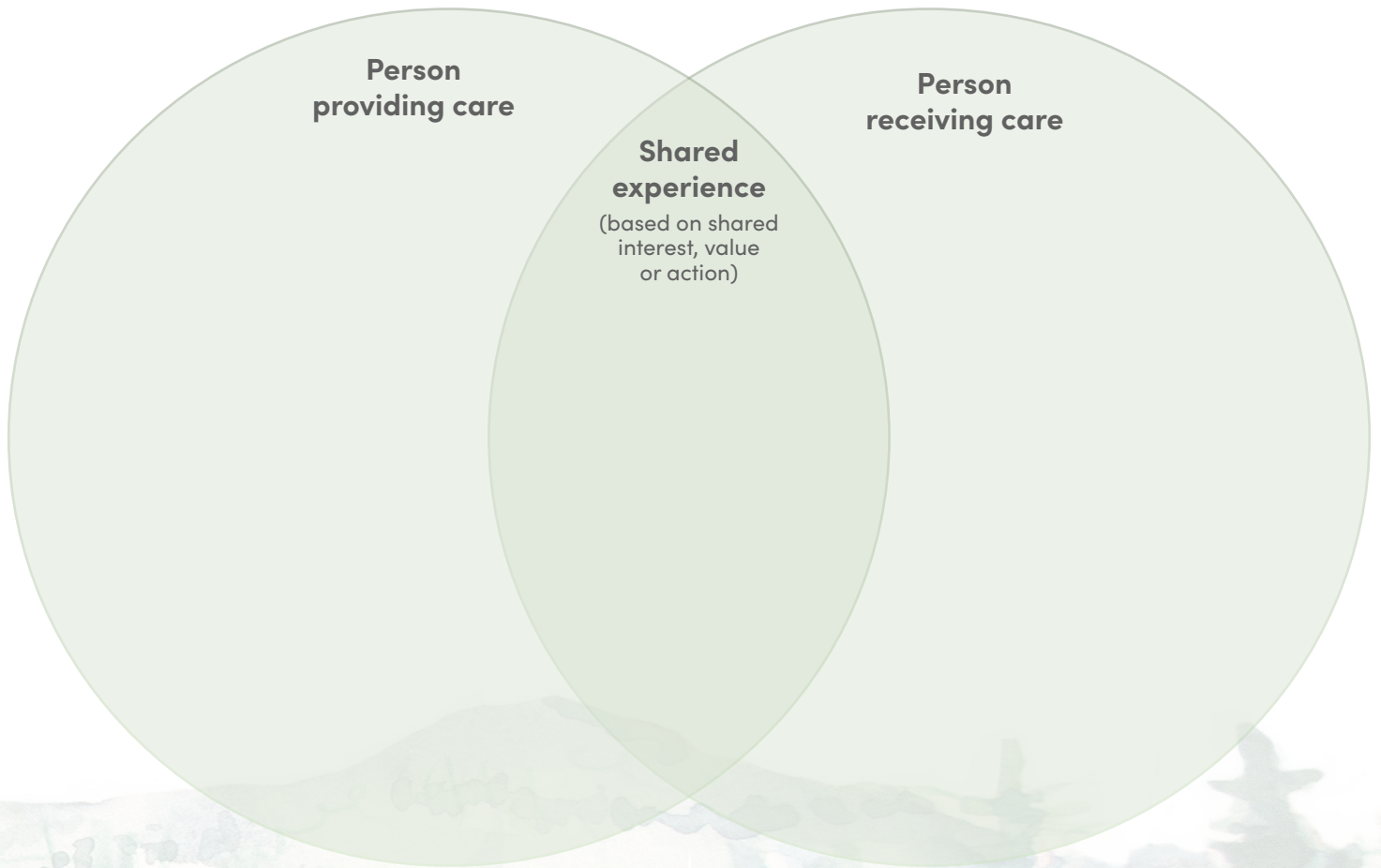
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**What might be meaningful to you?** Explore a moment or an activity that would be meaningful to you, one that might highlight wonders or help you feel part of a bigger picture. Experience that planned activity with your wonder goggles.



**Noticing Wonders**



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