



Contemplative Caregiving by John Eric Baugher

On-Sale Date: April 16, 2019

ISBN: 978-1-61180-704-2

Self-Help — Aging / Family & Relationships
— Life Stages — Later Years / Death, Grief,
Bereavement

Paperback | \$19.95 US / \$25.95 CAN

Trim: 6 x 9 | 240 pp.

Shambhala Publications, Inc. | Shambhala.com

Distributed by Penguin Random House



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Praise for:

Contemplative Caregiving

By John Eric Baugher, PhD

“We often imagine that when we care for another, we are the ‘giver’ and the one we care for is the ‘receiver.’ But in this important, extensive, and deep exploration of the experience of hospice volunteers, Baugher describes givers who feel like receivers—of gratitude, patience, and wisdom drawn from a deep connection to another human being at an ultimate moment. Having lost his mother as an eighteen-year-old, at the hands of a murderer, yet later bonding with fellow hospice volunteers who are themselves imprisoned for murder, Baugher pioneers for us the very outer frontiers of human empathy. A very important frontier, a very important book.”—**Arlie Hochschild**, author of *Strangers in Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right*, a finalist for the National Book Award

“An inspiring and compassionate story of how to transform personal suffering into the ground of mutually beneficial service. It is possible to keep our heart open in hell. This book illuminates the way.”—**Frank Ostaseski**, author of *The Five Invitations: Discovering What Death Can Teach Us About Living Fully*

“Our families, hospitals, prisons, and whole society can benefit from the vision of compassion offered by John Baugher. This is truly a book for the heart.”—**Thupten Jinpa**, principal translator to the Dalai Lama and author of *A Fearless Heart: How the Courage to Be Compassionate Can Transform Our Lives*

“A dazzling study of human vulnerability and connection, *Contemplative Caregiving* is wide-ranging in scope, profound in its intimacy. Based on interviews with diverse hospice caregivers—Vietnam veterans, nurses, housewives, Catholic nuns, convicted murderers—Baugher conjures the transformative potential of care in an array of moving and unexpected insights.”—**Yasmin Gunaratnam**, author of *Death and the Migrant* and *Researching Race and Ethnicity*

“*Contemplative Caregiving* is an invitation from author John Baugher to discover with him the transformative potential of love. In both living and dying, Baugher guides us exceedingly well.”—**Sharon Salzberg**, author of *Lovingkindness* and *Real Love*

“There’s a lot more to the spiritual path than silent meditation, and *Contemplative Caregiving* shows us how transformative end-of-life hospice work (and other types of compassionate care) can be. I was moved by the personal stories, many of them by prison inmate volunteers, who have a lot to teach the rest of us. A book not just to read but to cherish and share.”—**David Loy**, author of *Ecodharma: Buddhist Teachings for the Ecological Crisis*

“*Contemplative Caregiving* provides the medicine of what is needed: an awake heart-mind, receptivity, and community. Through sharing his personal work, rich storytelling, and historical context, John brings us on a journey to our true home—being in intimate relationship with ourselves and others through service.”—**Sensei Koshin Paley Ellison**, cofounder of the New York Zen Center for Contemplative Care, author of *Wholehearted: Slow Down, Help Out, Wake Up*, and editor of *Awake at the Bedside: Contemplative Teachings on Palliative and End-of-Life Care*

“As someone who transformed my own hell through a deep dive into hospice and contemplative caregiving, I am extremely inspired and moved by Baugher’s book *Contemplative Caregiving*. Who better to tell the story of so many transformed by giving and receiving compassionate care at the end of life, including prison inmates, than a man who has so deeply transformed his own unspeakable pain by bringing dignity to the suffering of others. This is a book about life and death, courage and compassion, and the transformative power of love.”—**Fleet Maul, PhD**, author of *Radical Responsibility* and *Dharma in Hell*

“A trenchant and groundbreaking book inviting readers to taste the real, profound, unscripted, and liberating effects experienced by someone generating and enacting compassion for another person. This book can speak to all of us, whoever we are, about ourselves, sounding an infinitely bright and uplifting note in the otherwise mounting overture of despair and confusion in our world today.”—**Patrick Gaffney**, editor of *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying* and *Talent for Humanity*

“*Contemplative Caregiving* is that rare book that deftly combines empirically grounded social science with an unapologetic vision to recognize and celebrate the dying and the people who care for them. Through the lives and experiences of a diverse sample of hospice volunteers—including prisoners—we come to see the truly transformative power of listening to and caring for people at the end of life.”—**Clare Stacey, PhD**, author of *The Caring Self*

“This book gives the reader an insider’s view of the ups and downs, the joys and challenges, the promises and perils of end-of-life caregiving. Here is an invitation to a spiritual practice that can be powerfully transformative and life-giving, not only for those who receive the gift of a caregiver’s compassionate presence but also for the caregivers themselves. In contemplatively caring for those who are dying, one may find therein the seeds of peace, hope, a quiet joy, and heartfelt gratitude for this gift of being human, in all it entails.”—**Ruben L. F. Habito**, guiding teacher at Maria Kannon Zen Center, Dallas, Texas, and author of *Living Zen, Loving God* and *Healing Breath*

“In this courageous book, John Baugher connects with the timeless wisdom of spiritual traditions both East and West. Picking up the mantle from Dame Cicely Saunders, Thich Nhat Hahn, and other visionaries, *Contemplative Caregiving* weaves together story and teaching with practical exercises to empower us to extend compassion to ourselves and all others without exception. An invitation to hope and healing in these troubled times.”—**Matthew Lee, PhD**, director of empirical research, Human Flourishing Program at Harvard University, and author of *The Heart of Religion*

“In this beautiful and moving book, we learn what it means to see caregiving as a path of redemption and transformation rather than a source of stress and burnout. The journeys described here are messy, rich, painful, and transcendent. *Contemplative Caregiving* is an absorbing read and an indispensable guide to all of us who live in this mortal world.”—**Leslie J. Blackhall, MD, MTS**, section head, palliative care, Tussi and John Kluge Chair, University of Virginia School of Medicine

“A work of courage and deep vulnerability that can inspire leaders in any field in moving beyond models of heroic action toward authentic, relational encounters with self and others. I invite all who pick up this book to see their own life’s journey reflected in its pages and to draw on the creative spaces within themselves to further a more compassionate twenty-first century.”—**Éliane Ubalijoro, PhD**, board member, International Leadership Association; professor of practice, McGill University

“In *Contemplative Caregiving*, Baugher bears witness to how deep listening and acceptance can transform suffering into compassion for ourselves and others, now and at the end of life. Insightful and practical, this book is essential reading for those preparing for chaplaincy and ministry.”—**Cheryl A. Giles**, Francis Greenwood Peabody Senior Lecturer on Pastoral Care and Counseling; faculty, Buddhist Ministry Initiative, Harvard Divinity School; and co-editor of *The Arts of Contemplative Care: Pioneering Voices in Buddhist Chaplaincy and*

