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## Medical Breakthroughs: More Than Medicine- Advice For Caregivers

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MORE THAN MEDICINE: ADVICE FOR CAREGIVERS:  
REPORT #1253

**A LESSON IN CARING:** Jana Carrington and her husband, Brendan, thought they had been through it all after he was diagnosed and treated for stage IV Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma. After his bone marrow transplant, Jana found out she had stage 3 breast cancer. The two relied on each other, as well as family and friends, to make it through the years of treatments and tests. Now both are healthy and wiser. Jana even wrote a book: A Touch of Hope - A Caregiver's Survival Guide. "One of the things that I live by is that if my experience doesn't benefit other people, then my experience loses value," says Jana.

**CAREGIVER STRESS:** The main focus of Jana's book is dealing with the stress caregivers experience. She says caregiver stress is becoming a national healthcare epidemic. In her book, Jana writes about the 50 million caregivers in the United States. She reports:

- Research shows caregivers are 63-percent more likely than non-caregivers to die early
- Caregivers are more susceptible to disease

**RELAXATION:** Jana says relaxation and meditation are keys to relieving the stress of being a caregiver. "You need to put more into that self care bank account than stress takes out," she says. As a massage therapist, Jana has seen what touch can do for stress levels. She says any kind of stress relief will help caregivers stay healthy. After all, caregivers are not able to provide the care they want to give if they have collapsed from exhaustion or in bed with a cold.

**BASIC NEEDS:** Jana says caregivers often neglect their most basic needs. "The basics of sleeping, eating, getting enough water, going to the bathroom when you need to go to the bathroom," she says. "Those little things that your body tells you on a daily basis that you need to do." Jana says taking care of the basics with consciousness -- knowing you are doing them to preserve your health -- is also



important.

**NO CANCER DAYS:** Jana and her husband created what they called "No Cancer Days." On these days either one of them could ban the topic of cancer for 24 hours. "I wasn't going to watch a movie about it. I wasn't going to talk on the phone about it ... nothing!" She says the no cancer days helped her decompress.

**IMPORTANT QUESTIONS:** Jana and her husband learned asking the doctor enough questions helped put their minds at ease once they got home. She says asking what the effects of a treatment will be five years down the road helped them make decisions about care.

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