

# Caregiver Corner

a  FreedomCare Publication

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 Summer Recipe



<https://www.freepik.com/vectors/sunset-sea> > Sunset sea vector created by rawpixel.com - www.freepik.com

## It's finally summer!

We hope you're enjoying the sunshine and keeping cool. In this Caregiver Corner, we'll explore the startling science behind ageism and how negative talk about aging affects older people's well-

being. Next, caregiver Vanessa J. shares how she manages her mother's Alzheimer's with love, patience, and music. Then we have a protein- and fiber-rich recipe perfect for summer BBQs.

# The Surprising Science of Ageism

One day, Dr. Becca Levy went to the grocery store with her mom, a lively woman in her seventies. While shopping, her mom tripped over a misplaced crate and scraped her leg. When her mom told the owner of the grocery store that there shouldn't be crates lying around in the aisles, he said that old people fall all the time and maybe they shouldn't be walking around.

It wasn't the physical scrape that impacted Becca and her mom long after they left the

store. For days after, Becca noticed that her mom seemed to question herself and asked Becca to take over tasks she normally handled on her own.

The man's words had a real impact on the older woman's well-being. Becca would go on to prove, with study after study, that the words we use and ideas we have around aging undeniably affect older people's mental, and even physical, health.

## What is ageism?

Ageism refers to our negative thoughts, feelings, and actions around aging and older people. We learn from a very young age to see and treat older people differently because of their age and these beliefs are deeply embedded in our culture, policies, and everyday life.

Here are some common ways ageism shows up:

Doctors, waiters, and others directing comments about an older person to a younger companion or relative

Talking to older people as if they are children by using a high, sing-song tone and phrases like "He's so sweet" and "Isn't she cute?"

Focusing conversations on events from the past instead of the present day

Talking negatively about our own age, as in, "I'm over the hill," "I'm turning 29 again," and general complaints about getting older

Patients not being offered certain treatments or tests because of their age



# Why does ageism matter?

Research shows that policies, ideas, and words related to aging can have a strong impact on older people's well-being:



When older people are talked down to because of their age, they can experience a downward spiral of **low self-esteem, depression, and withdrawal**.



Older people who heard positive words like "spry" and "creative" **did a better job with daily tasks**-like getting out of a chair or signing their name-than those that did not hear positive words.

44%

7.5 years

Older people with a more positive idea of aging were **44% more likely to recover** from a health issue that affected their activities of daily living.

People with a more positive idea of aging lived an average of **seven and a half years** longer than those with a more negative idea of aging.

## How can I reframe aging for my patient?

Let your patient take the lead when others assume they cannot speak or make decisions for themselves. You know your patient's needs and preferences and can step in if you need to.

Because you are close with your patient, you may use language with them that you wouldn't use with a stranger. Maybe you both call each other "honey" as a form of endearment and you both know it's not demeaning. Just consider how the words you choose affect your patient's attitude toward aging.

Instead of always thinking back to the old days, ask your patient about present-day events. This can help them generate positive feelings about and feel more engaged in their day-to-day life.

Consider your own feelings about aging and how those might rub off on your patient as you care for them each day. Practice talking positively about the aging process and pushing back when you hear others talk negatively about it.

If you think your patient's doctor may be making assumptions about your patient because of their age, ask your patient how they feel about it and if they'd like you to advocate for them.

Little by little, shifting the way we talk about aging and advocating for older people when others make assumptions about them can have a life-changing impact. It can mean greater ease with daily tasks, a happier, more engaged patient, a speedier recovery, and seven and a half more years together.



### Sources:

1. <https://areaagencyonaging.org/uncategorized/be-mindful-of-elderspeak-when-talking-to-an-older-adult/>
2. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/23/health/ageism-levy-elderly.html>
3. <https://publichealth.wustl.edu/speaking-up-about-ageism>
4. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/psychology/ageism>
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6. <https://www.who.int/news-room/questions-and-answers/item/ageing-ageism>



# Caregiver Spotlight

## Vanessa J.

In each Caregiver Corner, we highlight a new caregiver. We share their story of how they came to FreedomCare, what being a caregiver means to them, and any caregiving tips they wish to share with others. To be featured, email [omcgill@freedomcareny.com](mailto:omcgill@freedomcareny.com).

Vanessa's mom likes to dance. She loves old school R & B, light rock, and especially Madonna's "Holiday". When Vanessa drives her mom around or spends time with her at home, she always plays music, lifting her mom's spirits and getting her moving. "If she can dance to it, she loves it. Music is a breath of fresh air. It changes her energy and tone. To see her happy and smile makes my day no matter what."

Vanessa's mom has Alzheimer's. She doesn't know Vanessa as her daughter any more and calls Vanessa different names, but Vanessa still gets joy from being there to care for her. She tries her best to demonstrate love on a daily basis. "I love my mom, I hate the disease."

Because she can't truly know what her mom is going through, Vanessa leans on empathy and patience. If her mom says something she doesn't understand, she doesn't criticize or judge her. She engages with her and turns negatives into positives. A simple, "Oh wow!" delivered with compassion can make all the difference.

Vanessa joined FreedomCare three years ago. She and her husband don't have kids, but their home is still a zoo—they have an African gray parrot, a pitbull, a bearded dragon, the list goes on. FreedomCare allows Vanessa to be there for her aging parents at a critical time. "It's comforting for me because I know they're safe." She doesn't have to worry about whether they're eating, getting fresh air, or taking their medications. Although caring for her dad was not approved by his insurance, Vanessa feels it's important to give both her parents as much as she can because they gave so much to her. She's grateful that she has the opportunity to share her parents' older years with them and be there for them.

Managing Alzheimer's can sometimes require creative solutions, but Vanessa and her husband are up to the challenge. Vanessa noticed her mom often worried where she left her purse. She lost her purse two years ago and the stress of that experience still lingers in her mind. They would be driving and her mom would say, "My purse! It's not in the car! It's missing!" Even after Vanessa explained that they left it at home, her mom wouldn't believe her and they would argue.

The purse situation was taking a toll on Vanessa, so her husband suggested she implement a new system. They bought a pack of index cards. Every time Vanessa and her mom leave the house, they recite a checklist of items. "Mom, let's do the checklist. We've got the purse and we are leaving it here in the house before we go out." Vanessa hands her mother an index card that says "I, Vera J., left the house without my purse." Her mom then signs and dates the card and they bring it with them.

Now, when her mom worries she's lost her purse, Vanessa pulls out the index card and has her read it. "Oh wow, you're right. I left the purse at home. Okay." Her mom no longer gets upset or repeatedly asks about her purse. Vanessa found a way to reduce their stress, eliminate conflict, and give her mom control over the solution.

After a long day of caretaking, Vanessa helps her mom do some light exercises—including dancing the hustle—before making a healthy meal and getting her ready for bed. After she tucks her parents in and tells them she loves them, she sits outside for a little while to make sure they're safe before she heads home. "That's what we're here for. We're here to love each other and support each other."

# Mini Chickpea Flour Frittatas

Prep Time: 10 mins  
Cook Time: 35 mins | Serves 12

These mini chickpea frittatas are a fun, healthy, and filling alternative to egg frittatas.



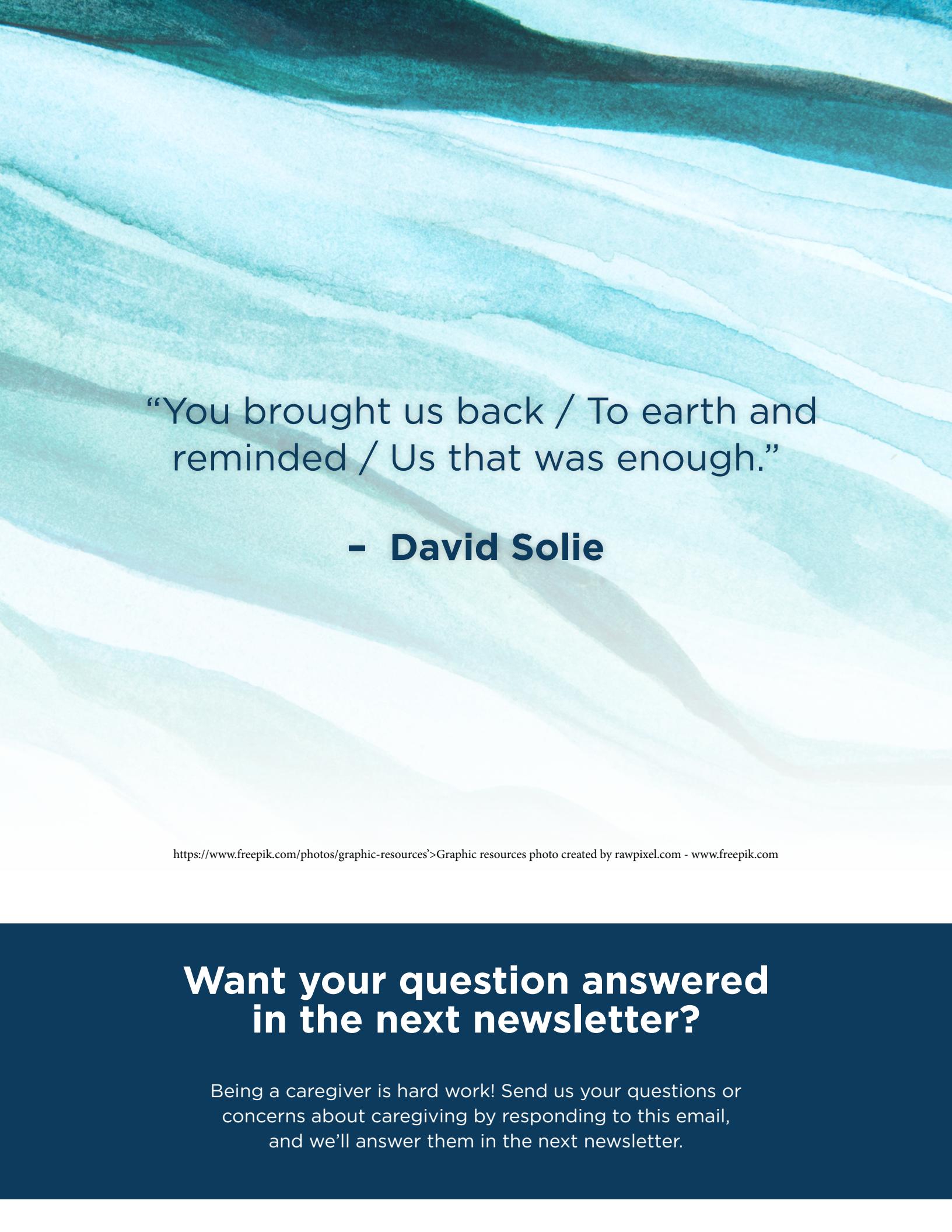
## Ingredients:

- 1 $\frac{3}{4}$  cups chickpea flour (also known as garbanzo bean flour or gram flour)
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup nutritional yeast, optional
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon dried basil
- $\frac{3}{4}$  teaspoon sea salt
- 2 cups water
- 1 cup corn (frozen, fresh, or canned)
- 1 large red bell pepper (1 cup), finely diced
- 1 jalapeno, finely diced, optional
- $\frac{1}{4}$  red onion or medium shallot, finely diced
- Handful of baby kale or spinach, roughly chopped
- Chives, to garnish

Feel free to change up the veggies, using at least 3 cups. Use an assortment of diced zucchini, mushrooms, peas, green bell peppers, or finely chopped broccoli or carrots. Fresh herbs would be great too!

## Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees F. If not using a non-stick muffin tin, lightly grease with oil or use muffin liners.
2. Mix: In a large mixing bowl, combine the chickpea flour, optional nutritional yeast, baking powder, salt, garlic powder, and basil. Whisk in the water (batter will be runny, but that's normal). Add the corn, bell pepper, jalapeno, onion, and baby greens, mix to combine.
3. Scoop: Using a  $\frac{1}{4}$  measuring cup, scoop the batter into the muffin tin, filling all 12 holes. Top with a sprinkle of chives.
4. Bake: Place in the oven, on the center rack, and bake for 35 – 45 minutes (depending on the veggies used). Do the toothpick test by sticking it in the center of a muffin. If it comes out clean, frittatas are ready. If cooking for 35 minutes and the center seems soggy, let them cool, and they will stiffen up nicely.
5. Remove from oven, turn out frittatas, and place on a cooling rack to cool.
6. Store: Leftovers can be stored, covered, in the refrigerator or on the counter. Reheat in a toaster oven or microwave.



“You brought us back / To earth and  
reminded / Us that was enough.”

– **David Solie**

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**Want your question answered  
in the next newsletter?**

Being a caregiver is hard work! Send us your questions or concerns about caregiving by responding to this email, and we'll answer them in the next newsletter.