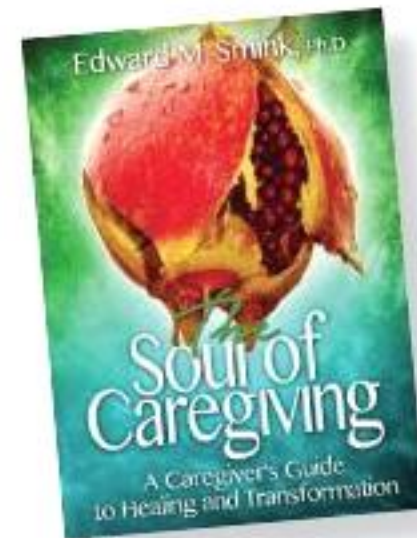




LOCAL READ

# Answering the Call of Caregiving

BY BRIAN SCHWARTZ



I love the opportunity to meet people whose desire to help others is so strong that they are willing to put in the necessary time and energy to research, write, and publish their wisdom. Whether or not it's true that 80% of us want to write a book, closer to 1% actually get it done. Add getting a Ph.D. to that, and that percentage gets even smaller.

That's why, whenever I meet an author, especially one who is also a Ph.D., I can't help but admire their extraordinary level of dedication and determination.

Edward Smink, Ph.D. is no exception. He's dedicated the last fifty years of his life to being a registered nurse, pastoral counselor, and executive leader. His passion is to connect with caregivers who are experiencing compassion fatigue. He compares overcoming compassion fatigue to eating an elephant one bite at a time—and for caregivers, one step at a time. Exploring this process is the question he set out to answer in his book "The Soul of Caregiving, A Caregiver's Guide to Healing and Transformation."

**What prompted you to write this book?** Reflecting on a life of nearly fifty years as a caregiver in multiple healthcare and leadership roles gives me pause to seek to find a voice and be heard. There are many reasons why one would want to write a book, and as a caregiver, something within me aches to share the insights and wisdom that I hold as a sacred treasure. I want to reach out to all who care selflessly for others. I want to say that the scars or interior wounds that you experience as caregivers are invitations to rediscover your soul. You are not alone. You are not going mad when your soul aches because you have cared.

**How do caregivers build up resilience?** Resilience is built by caregivers developing self-care practices that include reflection on their experiences.

They overcome the cultural mores of not trusting their teammates or families; of not talking about their stories so as to be heard; and not stuffing their feelings so as to speak openly about their emotions in how their normal human reactions to abnormal traumatic events affected them.

**What's the takeaway for readers?** As the title suggests, my hope is caregivers will rediscover their soul of caregiving. It is not a how-to book, but one that will encourage the reader to reflect on their experiences. After each chapter there are questions that can assist the reader.

**What was the greatest challenge you faced in getting published?** The greatest challenge I faced was believing I had something to say, and to find a publishing consultant that supported my vision.

In addition to being an author, Smink is a certified coach for caregivers, speaker, and presenter for organizations seeking ways to better cope with compassion fatigue, burnout, and strategies for self-care. He lives in Atascadero and can be reached via his website: [soulofcaregiving.com](http://soulofcaregiving.com) **SLO LIFE**



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