

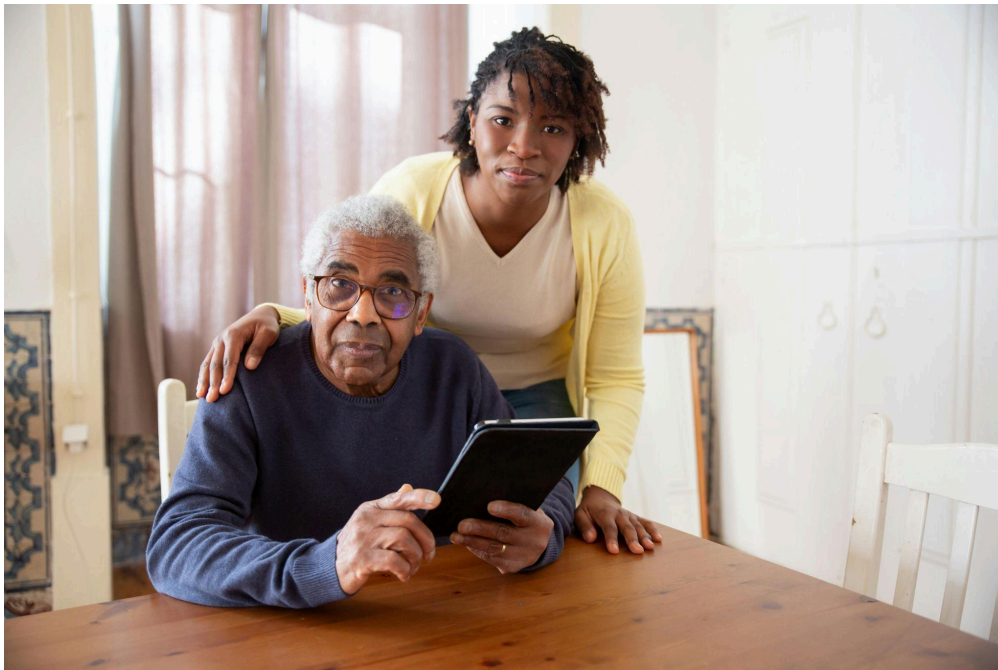
An Exploration of Aging and Caregiving in America

Listening to the Aging and Caregiving Experience

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Introduction

At [Share More Stories](#), we've spent the past several years exploring the lived experiences of older adults and caregivers through our [SEEQ Platform](#). Across a range of projects, we've listened to hundreds of stories from people navigating caregiving responsibilities, personal health transitions, emotional upheaval, and identity shifts. These stories have illuminated the emotional truths that sit beneath aging and caregiving in America today. And they've helped our partners make smarter, more human-centered decisions about brand messaging, marketing, and product experience.



More and more companies are focused on improving the aging experience in America – largely by focusing more deeply on caregiving.

Our insights can help reinforce those endeavors.

Even more importantly, they help leaders in this space see aging and caregiving not simply as systems to optimize, but as deeply human experiences that demand a shift in how we show up — as brands, as designers, and as listeners.

What We've Learned and How It's Helped Us See Aging and Caregiving Differently

1. Aging and Caregiving Are Stories of Identity, Not Just Health



From health and wellness members recovering from grief to caregivers navigating uncertainty, people talked about identity being unraveled -- and slowly reformed -- through their experiences. Yes, these are stories about medicine and logistics and physical care. They're also stories about memory, loss, self-definition, and interdependence.

"When I was caring for my sister full-time, I stopped doing the things that made me feel like me. I didn't notice until I realized I couldn't remember the last time I laughed. Not just smiled, but really laughed." — Female, 60s

"After my father passed away, it was the first place I went. It wasn't just about working out — it was about being with people who knew me and cared about me. The sense of community made all the difference in helping me navigate that loss." — Female, 50s

"Amid doctors' visits, medicine distribution, and general mood-lifting for my dad, I had to think deeply about what I needed to do to protect my peace... I forgot who I was for a minute there." — Female, 50s

In looking at the emotional scores across stories related to aging and caregiving experiences, we see high levels of self-transcendence, structure, and closeness — reflecting a deep desire for purpose, emotional grounding, and identity clarity during major life transitions. This helps us better understand the emotional undercurrents of identity loss and rebuilding in later life and caregiving contexts.

These stories remind us: caregiving and aging are identity journeys. Most providers focus on health outcomes. SEEQ reveals the emotional rebuilding of self that happens in parallel — and how brands can support that transformation.

2. Caregivers Are Consumers, Too, and They're Often Invisible



Many caregivers feel unseen and unacknowledged by the healthcare systems and brands around them. This invisibility contributes to emotional fatigue, anxiety, and decision paralysis—especially when they're expected to navigate complex care choices with little support.

"I don't think I realized how lonely caregiving would be. People check on my mom, but no one really checks on me. I learned to be my own support system." — Female, 50s

"I had to find a new home care provider, but every website was the same. Stock photos. Bullet points. No soul. No clue what they were like until I called, and even then I wasn't sure." — Female, 40s

In the emotional data, we see **openness**, **neuroticism**, and **anxiety** scoring highly, indicating both the intensity of emotional strain and the resilience or hopefulness many caregivers still hold. Their openness suggests a readiness to engage more deeply, but only if they are first recognized and supported. These patterns point to the need for systems and services that do more than organize care. They must also recognize the humanity of the caregiver.

Caregivers are asking for, but rarely receiving, more empathetic and human-centered kinds of support. While they certainly need quality services and easy-to-use checklists, what they are truly seeking is recognition, trust, and guidance that feels human.

3. Connection > Convenience: Community and Belonging Matter Most



Older adults consistently valued experiences where they felt emotionally seen, socially connected, and spiritually grounded. From receptionists at check-in to group fitness instructors, the people delivering the experience often mattered as much as the programs, services and treatments themselves.

"A woman noticed I was new and took the time to welcome me, making me feel seen and included. That small act of kindness reminded me how powerful community can be." — Female, 60s

"My daughter convinced me to try [a new workout] after my stroke. The machines didn't matter — I came back because a staff member remembered my name. That meant everything." — Male, 70s

Emotional scores further validate this: **closeness**, **harmony**, and **self-transcendence** were all elevated across stories from older adults. These emotions point to a longing not just for safety or ease, but for connection, meaning, and shared presence. These reinforce that connection, dignity, empathy and emotional resonance are not simply aspirational words, or "nice-to-haves." They are the building blocks of trust, belonging and care – and they are essential to how older adults interpret quality – not by metrics, but by moments.

4. Marketing That Resonates Must Speak to Emotions, Not Categories

From caregivers to older adults to women in midlife, people rarely frame their needs in transactional language. Instead, they express anxiety, longing, hope, and weariness. If we limit our understanding of these consumers to segments or archetypes, we lose the nuance that makes them human.

"Midlife isn't a box to check. It's a blur of caregiving, change, career questions, physical weirdness, and emotional growth. Please don't reduce me to a phase or a product." — Female, 40s

"I didn't need another app. I needed someone to tell me I wasn't failing." — Female, 50s

Looking at emotional patterns, we see high scores for **openness**, **curiosity**, and **artistic interest** — especially among women experiencing midlife. These emotional insights suggest that people want to be understood in the full richness of their lived experiences, not boxed into reductive demographic labels. These data-informed signals align with what we've heard in stories: people want to be recognized not by category, but by who they really are.

Therefore, messaging should prioritize empathy, clarity, and emotional validation — more than functionality alone. Continued storytelling at scale can illuminate unmet needs and shape a more resonant brand.

The Industry Framing, and a Fresh Take



Many of today's caregiving models and aging services -- especially in the institutional and service-delivery context -- are designed around system needs, not human ones. Most caregiving organizations, providers, and systems tend to treat caregiving as:

- A **functional need** (e.g., care coordination, medication management, ADL support),
- A **logistical problem** (e.g., staffing shortages, billing systems),
- Or a **compliance requirement** (e.g., CMS standards, quality scores).

The dominant industry framing is **operational** and **transactional**, even when organizations say they value compassion or dignity. For example, marketing copy might focus on care and compassion – and rightly so. But the product experience may focus heavily or even solely on getting people through steps in a process – not on the connection need, emotional labor, or identity disruption that caregivers and those they care for are dealing with.

What SEEQ has uncovered is a fundamentally different reality, one where people are not only navigating tasks or decisions, but also grief, fear, guilt, love, and identity shifts. These emotions often go unrecognized or unsupported. It's not "either or." It's "both and."

What the Stories Tell Us

Across the stories we've gathered, we consistently see things like:

- Women in midlife articulating the **multiplicity of identity**, as caregiver, daughter, mother, leader, patient, and self, all in flux
- Caregivers expressing **isolation, self-doubt, and emotional invisibility** ("I didn't need another app. I needed someone to tell me I wasn't failing.")
- Older adults tying **trust and dignity** to small, relational moments ("She remembered my name.")

These are more than anecdotes. They are **emotional data points**, and they challenge the industry to go deeper than transactions or checklists.



Outcomes and Impact

What Happens When We Center the Human Experience

Across our work, we've seen clear and measurable outcomes when stories and emotional insights are used to improve aging and caregiving experiences. Here are some of the most meaningful shifts:

1. Increased Trust and Retention Through Emotional Connection

- Deep listening to caregivers and aging adults led to improved trust and transparency in care experiences.
- Teams became more attuned to the emotional needs of patients and caregivers, resulting in greater satisfaction and reduced disengagement.

2. Better Experience Design by Mapping Emotional Journeys

- Insights from stories helped reframe care not just as a set of services, but as a relational journey.
- Organizations redesigned programs and staff engagement to prioritize emotional moments, especially for people navigating grief, health crises, or social isolation.

3. Clearer Messaging and Brand Alignment with Underserved Populations

- Story-based insights revealed unmet emotional needs, particularly around identity, belonging, and visibility during transition phases.
- Messaging and marketing strategies shifted to reflect lived experiences rather than demographic stereotypes, resonating more deeply with target audiences.

4. Staff Empowerment and Cultural Alignment in Care Delivery

- Stories helped internal teams reconnect with purpose, clarify values, and align their work with human-centered care.
- Emotional values like self-transcendence and closeness became more visible in team culture and daily interactions with clients and families.

How SEEQ Can Help

SEEQ can support companies, organizations and brands developing better care experiences, serving older adults, or both, three high-impact areas:

1. Brand and Messaging Strategy

Use stories and emotional insights to:

- Build deeper resonance with aging adults and caregivers.
- Validate brand positioning and voice through the lens of lived experience.
- Identify language that conveys trust, dignity, and empowerment without clinical distance, condescension or hierarchy.

2. Product and Experience Design and Management

- Use stories to identify pain points, needs, and emotional moments that matter most.
- Prioritize features and services that reflect unmet needs for support, recognition, and continuity.
- Map the full journey of aging and caregiving through narrative arcs.

3. Marketing and Communication

- Inform creative direction, segmentation, and campaigns rooted in actual language and emotions shared by caregivers and aging adults.
- Develop narrative frameworks that humanize aging and caregiving for target audiences.

Recap: Listening is the Key to Empathy and Innovation

Aging and caregiving aren't just healthcare categories. They are emotional universes filled with contradictions, resilience, love, loss, and the daily work of navigating uncertainty.

SEEQ helps you enter that world through the experiences, words and emotions of the people who live it, in a radically human way, and it starts with leaders who listen.

If you're ready to create caregiving experiences rooted in trust and delivered through emotional stewardship with your employees, consumers, patients, their families, and communities – if you're ready to turn emotional insight into real progress — we invite you to take the next step:

- Learn more about leaders who listen → <https://sharemorestories.com/how-to-listen-to-peoples-experiences/>
- Explore how SEEQ helps companies move from intention and insight to impact → <https://sharemorestories.com/emotional-insight-impact-seeq/>
- Try SEEQ for yourself → <https://seeq.sharemorestories.com/demo/>
- Book a 30-minute meeting → <https://calendly.com/james-sms/30min>

Together, we can build better caregiving experiences for everyone involved, designed with intention, and delivered with impact.