

Nursing Home Rhymes

Steven John Donahue

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Episode 1: A Journey of Care

Opening Rhyme

As we age like the oaks in our prime we all roam,
To a home where the broken still seek a new throne,
Not to hear in the distance a cry, “Oaks will fall!”
But to live with a grace that’s remembered by all.

Anapestic tetrameter: da-da-DUM x4—upbeat, sets the tone.

Welcome Hey, I’m Steven—welcome to *Nursing Home Rhymes*. My wife Linda’s been in a nursing home 26 months. Hard? You bet. Heartbroken? Sure. Learned from my stumbles? Damn right. Want to walk this path with me? Here’s my story—an odyssey of care. Why rhymes? They fit things together—like visits should fit our loved ones. Nursing homes are a world of choices—some good, some tough. Let’s start with the lay of the land.

LTSS Overview Here’s the big picture on Long-Term Services—LTSS:

1. Revenue runs it—cash in, costs down, beds full.
2. Smell test—if it’s off, trust your nose.
3. Medicaid’s big—62% of residents, half the \$130 billion pot.
4. Leaving’s rare—5–10% get out alive, slim odds.
5. Residents roll through—15–20% of long-stay discharge, 40% feet-first.
6. It’s growing—16 million in LTSS today, 23 million by 2030.
7. 50 million Americans know someone inside—right now.

More details in future episodes—focus here is broad strokes.

Linda’s Story Linda, 66, my wife of 16 years, had a stroke 15 years back—March 2010. I stepped up—got my CNA, Red Cross certs, gave my all. She coasted till 2022, then hit rough patches. I handed guardianship to her sister—my first misstep. But Linda? She fought back—mind, memory, even steps forward. My love’s deeper than ever. I’m working to bring her home—stay tuned. This will be quite a story.

Statistically my chances of getting her out of there are between 5-15 percent!

The Structured Visit Here’s my trick: the Structured Visit. Two years, 15,000 miles, near-daily trips. Some folks bring fast food, stand by the bed—awkward, but gold to residents. Others, like Kate, shine—she’s there daily for her daughter with MS, bringing Bingo, meals, life. Kate wrote: “Steve and I sign in minutes apart. Summer porch days, feeding squirrels—Steve’s got snacks for Linda too.” Her daughter’s fading, but we talk, connect—it lifts us.

Kate's truth? "Visit near-daily to know their care." She said, "If I'm ever in a home, I hope my husband's as good as Steve." That hit me hard—good grows even here.

Secret: Try to find something beautiful each day; even if it's the color of a bruise on your arm. Say a prayer before entering and after leaving—someone's listening.

Here's my routine—60–180 minutes, not all daily:

- **60–90 min:** Kiss her, make her laugh, pray for healing. Plan meals, wheel her to bathroom, ice, dishes, laundry, Febreeze, closet check, hair, face, glasses, dentures, sweep, eat—room or porch. Perfume if outside. Weekly: church check, nails. Twice-weekly: creams. Sew as needed.
- **90–120 min:** Porch if Nebraska weather holds—feed squirrels, birds. Chat—her past, our next, TV. PT room if open.
- **120–180 min:** Bingo, crafts, back to room—bathroom, food, recap today, plan tomorrow. Kiss, laugh, pray.
- **Home:** 10 calls daily—cooking, Tortie the cat, prayers morn and night. I always answer.

Closing Rhyme This is the good—more to come. I'm one guy, 71, shouting for connection. I need your stories—good, saintly, broken-hearted. No think-tank papers—we need *us*. Choices for our oaks? Personal. Victories? Same.

Stay tuned—reach out: info@nursinghomerhymes.com.

Un-der the spread-ing oak tree,
 I sold you and you left me,
 Bro-ken and spent and not free,
 In that old folks' box locked a-way,
 A vis-it I bring now each day,
 You home-bound that day I pray,
 Un-til some-one will sell me to stay.

Anapestic, variable feet—raw, reflective close.