



Caregivers Out
of Isolation

Caring Solutions

JANUARY 2009

Surviving and Thriving Through the Winter

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Winter is not usually the favorite season for many people, while we may feel alive and rejuvenated in the summer, often winter can make us suffer from a general feeling of unhappiness. This may be especially true for caregivers.

Isolation and mounting caregiving responsibilities can impact stress levels and can leave you feeling overwhelmed, angry and alone.

Many caregivers avoid asking for help and attempt to do everything themselves. If help is available it can be extremely beneficial to the caregiver. Assistance with caregiving may reduce feelings of stress and may bring people closer together.

While it may be difficult, asking for help does not mean failure!



Tips for Asking Family Members or Friends for Help

- Sit down with them in person or find a quiet time to speak on the phone.
- Review the list of the care receiver needs.
- Specifically discuss areas which you think they could help.
- Inquire about whether they would like to help out in a particular area.
- Clearly explain the tasks and what they could do to help.

Time to Myself, What Time?

When you take on the task of caregiving, time becomes your most important resource. Caregiving requires a large time commitment, perhaps all of the extra time you had for yourself. If that happens, problems can arise. One way to prevent the frustration, and resentment that cause caregiver burnout is to take some time for yourself.

If you wait until all of your chores and caregiving tasks are done before doing things for yourself, you will wait a very long time. Instead, decide on the minimum amount of time you need each day to meet your basic personal needs. Carve that time out of your schedule. Schedule some me time, then figure out how the chores will get done.

Editors Note:

I used to stress out about chores around the house not being done. A pile of laundry here and a dirty dish there. I soon came to realize that there are other things in life worth stressing out over.

NL CAREGIVERS
OUT OF
ISOLATION
280 TORBAY RD,
SUITE W100

TOLL FREE
CAREGIVER LINE

1-888-571-2273



*The
Deadline for
filing your
2008 tax
return is
April 30th ,
2009*

2008 Tax Returns - Information from Revenue Canada

Generally filing your tax return needs to be done on or before

April 30th, 2009 .

Early February - 2008 General Income Tax and Benefit Packages for a province or territory are available at post offices in that province or territory .

February 9 - First day for using NETFILE or TELEFILE visit www.cra.gc.ca

Members of the Institutes of Chartered Accountants offer free income tax services to Seniors and low income residents during the months of April and March of each year . These services are held in designated areas in the following communities: St. John's/Mt. Pearl, Corner Brook, Gander, and Grand-Falls

Windsor. Seniors with a total personal Income of \$25,000 qualify. For other individuals it's \$20,000.

For more information please call : The Institute of Chartered Accountants at 1-709-753-7566

New Award Program Recognizes Contribution of Newfoundland and Labrador's Seniors

The contributions of Newfoundland and Labrador seniors will receive recognition through a new awards program launched today by the Honourable Ross Wiseman, Minister of Health and Community Services and Minister Responsible for Aging and Seniors. Beginning this year, the Newfoundland and Labrador Seniors of Distinction Awards will be awarded annually to recognize and celebrate the contributions, achievements and diversity of seniors throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

A copy of the guidelines and nomination form can be obtained by visiting www.gov.nl.ca/health or by calling 1-888-494-2266. The deadline to submit nominations is April 2, 2009. A selection committee will review the nominations and make recommendations to the minister. A Seniors of Distinction Awards ceremony will take place during Seniors Month in June to announce and honour the award recipients.

Journaling Caregiver Stress



Madelyn Kubin was a Kansas farm woman who overpowered her own failing health to care for her husband after he suffered a debilitating stroke. She chronicled her experience through writing letters to her daughter in a journal . There are many lessons for all caregivers in Madelyn's experiences. Here is one, illustrated with excerpts from the book *Letters from Madelyn, Chronicles of a Caregiver*:

"I had reached a stage where everything about Quentin irritated me. I hated the way he huffed and puffed when he got in bed. It didn't start my morning off right to get out of bed and step on a very wet Depend.

I wanted to scream when he would sit and watch me put the orange juice, medication and vitamins, etc. on the table. And then when I would come with the toast, he acted like he was surprised that it was time for breakfast. It made me furious that I would have to wait and wait while he struggled to get his chair located right.

I don't have time to remember and itemize all the other irritants, but I can tell you that everything he did aggravated me.

I do realize that the stroke has affected him in so many ways that aren't obvious. I also know he is definitely not this way by choice and that he is not trying to irritate me.

I believe it is important 'To do unto others as you would have them do unto you.' That is the reason I don't want to be cross with him. I also realize that some day I might be in even worse condition than he is. It would be awful to be struggling with every little thing and have your caretaker and others cross with you, so I've readjusted my attitude, and today I'm feeling a little better.

Editors Note :

Madeline survived her caregiving experience by taking care of herself physically, mentally, and spiritually. Although there is nothing that can make the job of caregiving easy, there are resources and support groups that can help a person cope. Journaling or writing letters is also a good way to vent stress and reflect on your caregiving role. For more information or to view the Book, "Letters from Madeline, Chronicles of a Caregiver", please visit www.laineypublishing.com

*“When
choosing
vegetables
pick a green
and orange
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Nutrition Tips - By Regional Nutritionist

Lesley Burgess , M.Sc, R.D. with Eastern Health

Eating well is one of the best things you can do for yourself! It will help you feel and look your best. If you already have heart disease, osteoporosis, diabetes or cancer, eating well and being physically active may help you better manage these diseases. If you do not have these diseases, healthy eating can help you stay that way!

Although nutrition is important at any age, there are some nutrition concerns especially significant for seniors.

As we age we often need fewer calories but more vitamin and minerals! So the food you choose should be low in fat and sugar, but loaded with nutrition! Chocolate, cookies and fried foods do not meet these criteria! Vegetables and fruit on the other hand, have a variety of vitamins and minerals and are naturally low in fat, sugar and salt.

The brighter, the better. When choosing vegetables pick a green and orange one everyday. Some examples are as carrots, sweet potato, pumpkin, broccoli, green peas, spinach, green peppers.

Snack Smart. Add fruit to your breakfast and snacks. Try frozen berries in yogurt or a banana.

Make fiber your friend!

Another reason to choose vegetables and fruit is that they have fiber. Fiber is also found whole grain bread, pasta and cereals, beans and nuts. These foods keep your bowels in working order, grab cholesterol, other toxins and wastes and carry them out of the body and keep your blood sugar stable. When increasing your fiber just make sure you drink plenty of water to avoid gas, bloating or constipation!

Vitamin D and calcium are important minerals for strong bones, teeth and muscles which can help seniors avoid injuries and broken or fractured bones. Vitamin D is found in sardines, salmon, herring, margarine and fortified milk. Calcium is found in milk, cheese, yogurt, broccoli, and salmon with the bones. Canada’s Food Guide now recommends that everyone over the age of 50 should be taking a Vitamin D supplement 400 IU.

Drink to your health!

As we age we don’t always realize when we are thirsty. Our body needs plenty of fluids and not drinking enough water can lead to dehydration. You can meet your needs with juices, milk, and non caffeinated beverages as well as water. Alcohol and drinks with caffeine can actually cause the body to lose fluids and become dehydrated, so drink them sparingly.

Winter Storm Preparedness

(Information From Environment Canada)

Planning Ahead

Although most power outages last for just a few minutes, in extreme cases such as during severe weather events, outages can last for longer periods of time. Extended power outages do happen from time to time, so it makes sense to be prepared.

Think ahead and have a flashlight, electric lantern, extra batteries and candles on supply. Remember to use candles with caution and with proper candle holders. Never leave burning candles unattended, as they can be a potential fire hazard. It is recommended to use flashlights or electric lanterns instead. Prepare for possible isolation in your home and consider an alternative safe heating system.

Also, ensure that you have sufficient heating fuel for fire places or wood burning stoves. Every home should have smoke alarms, fire extinguishers, sprinklers and families should have a fire escape plan in place.

It is a good idea to assess the trees on your property and trim dead branches to reduce the danger of them falling onto power lines or your house during a storm. Stay away from fallen power lines. A hanging power line could be charged (live) and you may run the risk of electrocution. Also remember that ice, branches or power lines can continue to break and fall for several hours after the end of the storm.

If your home heating system fails, the following precautions may be considered:

- Remain calm - your house may remain warm for several hours.
- Avoid opening doors unnecessarily.
- During a power failure, turn off all electrical appliances.
- If you have a safe, approved alternate heat source, begin using it before the house cools down.
- Ensure that you maintain adequate ventilation.
- Stay warm by dressing in layers and bringing out extra blankets.
- Consider closing off one room for primary heating and use.
- If concerned over pipes freezing--opening a tap even a small amount may keep water moving through the system enough to keep pipes from freezing.
- Make sure fire alarms are working properly
- Have flashlights on hand. Avoid using candles if possible .

As a caregiver other suggestions include:

- Having a refill of prescriptions available in case you are house bound.
- Keeping up to date records of medications
- Have a list of emergency numbers handy
- Set up a phone buddy system with a neighbor to ensure someone knows you

“ Never use a camp stove , barbecue or propane heater indoors.”

R-E-S-P-I-T-E Spells Respect

We are just now beginning to hear – and understand – the voices of the millions of Canadians who care at home for aging, sick and disabled relatives. Most caregivers want nothing more than a little **r-e-s-p-i-t-e**. It is clear that the fundamental reform of medicare will require substantial investment in the area in which most care actually is provided at home. Home care has, indeed, been identified as a crucial but neglected building block in the ‘architecture’ of national health care. The need for this service will become increasingly pressing with our aging population. The number of Canadians age 65 and over is expected to double from nearly 4 million in 2000 to almost 8 million by 2026. Although seniors are healthier and living longer than before, the fact remains that the incidence of disability rises with age. Statistics Canada reports that nearly half of older Canadians experience some form of functional limitation. But even an investment in formal home care inadvertently may overlook the real anchor of the health system.

Informal caregivers – Despite the physical and mental exhaustion, not to mention cost, most caregivers would not have it any other way. They would not choose anything other than to provide the support and attention that only they can – and want to – give. Most caregivers just need a break. They need respite (sounds like ‘desperate’). How fitting.

In spite of its importance, respite is not well understood either by many of the organizations that deliver it or by governments that should be funding it. The term ‘respite’ often is used to refer to a uniform service in which an outside person – usually from a community organization – comes into the home for a designated period to allow caregivers some time off from their caregiving responsibilities. This form of respite is necessary. In fact, it is essential. But it is not sufficient. Caregivers gain relief, in reality, from many different types of assistance. They are the ones best able to identify what these are. Several national studies have found that reprieve derives from a number of possible supports delivered within or outside the home. These supports include temporary breaks, a personal emergency system, information and training with respect to care receiver needs, adult day programs for the care receiver, housekeeping, outdoor home maintenance, counseling and peer support. Even being able to work a few hours or days a week is a relief for some caregivers who may worry about their financial circumstances or job security. There are some exemplary projects under way throughout the country to test various models of respite.

But these efforts are sporadic and seriously under-resourced in the absence of a national caregiver strategy. The Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Atlantic Divisions of the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada, for example, provided small cash payments directly to caregivers to meet their personal needs related to their caregiving role. The organization set no predetermined list of services, activities or items eligible for funding. Caregivers were encouraged to use these funds for their own individualized solutions. In Montreal, a caregiver project operated by a group called The Lighthouse helped create physical and emotional respite for the parents of seriously ill children. A network of volunteers was trained to organize recreational activities adapted for the children's specific needs. The Alzheimer Society of Ottawa is working with several partners to develop a respite bungalow. The dwelling will be a temporary home for people with dementia. It will provide caregivers with breaks ranging from several hours during the day or night to three weeks of continuous care, up to a maximum 60 days per year.

If there is one conclusion to be drawn from the emerging models of respite, it is this: Caregivers experience relief in many different ways. Any program in respect of caregivers should allow them to choose from a range of options the most appropriate supports – whether for their own needs or those of the care receiver. It is clear that respite is a word in search of understanding, support and respect. Others would argue that is precisely what it means. A national caregiver strategy would be a significant step forward in meeting the needs of those unheralded Canadians who secure the foundation of our health care system.

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Editors Note : The Canadian Caregiver Coalition has recently released in December of 2008 A Framework for a Canadian Caregiver Strategy. To view online please visit, www.ccc-ccan.ca

Important Contact Information in Newfoundland and Labrador

Providing Unpaid Caregivers of Family and Friends, Support, Information and Assistance



Seniors Resource Centre of NL

1-800-563-5599

24-HR Mental Health Crisis Line

(for anyone who needs to talk)

1-888-737-4668

Alzheimer Society

1-877-776-0608

Cancer Society Info Line

1-888-939-3333

Coalition Against Violence

1-709-757- 0137 (Violence Prevention Initiative)

Emergency Alert Foundation

1-800-563-7082

Parkinson's Society

1-800-567-7020

Independent Living Resource Centre

1-709-722-4031

TTY - 709-722--7998

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If you're not already on our mailing list, just send us this form or call us on the Caregiver Line 1-888-571-2273.

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE #: _____

Tick here if you'd like us to send you invitations to Workshops and other free caregiver events in your area.