

CAREGIVER TIMES

A Network for People Who Are Caring for Family and Friends

WINTER 2011

It's Never Too Early to Start the Conversation: Talking to Parents about Their Changing Needs©

By Karen Henderson

“If you don't want to talk about this, or if you can't, maybe you could just pray for a tornado to hit your parents the day before they get sick.” Shlomo F. Kreitzer, a retired psychologist.

There are some things in life we don't really want to think about; consequently we don't plan for them. One of those 'things' is aging parents and their changing needs.

Whether we want to face it or not, eldercare is already a reality for the first wave of Canada's 10 million baby boomers; many of us, however, are utterly unprepared to assume the role of caregiver for our aging parents. Some facts on caregiving now: there are 4.5 million caregivers in Canada. They provide 80-90% of home care. Employees juggling work/family cost Canadian employers at least \$2.6 billion/yr in lost time. Two-thirds of adult children have never talked with their parents about their long term care needs (American Association of Retired Persons - AARP). Adult children often spend more years providing care for a parent than raising a child.

We somehow think parents will go on forever; but we suffer from our denial - denial which can lead to countless problems, stresses and ultimately to caregiver illness or depression.

Somebody – either the adult child or parent – has to start the conversation about a parent's plans for the future. Otherwise a crisis will do it for you. When you are in crisis, you are under tremendous stress to make decisions too quickly, with too little information.

Caregiving can start gradually or it can start suddenly with a desperate phone call in the night. However it starts, in all probability you won't be ready.

So...how can you begin to prepare?

1. Expect and accept that your parents will grow old. Aging is not a disease; it is part of the life cycle.
2. Remember the 40/70 rule; when adult children are about the age of 40 and parents the age of 70, it's time to start the care conversation, a conversation that could continue for months, even years before it is concluded. Talk to your parents about what they want as they age. If they want to stay in their own home, should they be looking at home renovations to make it easier to go up/down stairs or use the bathroom if a wheelchair is or may be required?

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CAREGIVER SUPPORT PROGRAM

3425 Crowley Drive
Vancouver, BC
V5R 6G3

Tel. 604-877-4699

Pre-Recorded
Information Line:
604-877-4683

Website:
www.vch.ca/caregivers/

E-mail:
caregiversupport@vch.ca

Fax: 604-872-2368

CURRENT PROGRAMS & SERVICES:

Education & Workshops

Monthly Support Groups

Caregiver Information &
Referral

Community
Presentations

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3. Understand the critical role of legal and financial planning. Start to gather information about your parents' financial security; learn where original documents are stored. Ensure your parents have prepared necessary documents such as wills, advance directives and powers of attorney. Be prepared for some emotional encounters but don't give up.
4. Talk to your siblings about how you plan to divide responsibility for your parents' well being. Another way to start the conversation is to call a family meeting. This way everyone – parents and adult children – will understand the problems; all will have a chance to participate in the solutions. If a sibling is out of town, try to set up a teleconference. The only reason a parent should be excluded is if he is too mentally impaired to understand or contribute and would impair any progress.
5. If a parent suffers from a particular disease...heart or stroke, arthritis, diabetes, dementia...learn all you can now about the disease and what a caregiver can expect as the disease progresses.
6. Ask questions about the health care system in your parents' province; understand what alternate accommodations exist, how home care operates, what social services are available.
7. Talk to your peers or professionals about how they are facing the challenges of eldercare, the problems they have encountered and solutions they have found.
9. Talk to your employer about your EAP program or other benefits that may assist family caregivers.
10. Finally, take an objective look at yourself. Are you prepared to be a caregiver for a parent? How will you accomplish this, along side your other roles as a business professional, parent, spouse?

Some don'ts

- Don't make promises you may not be able to keep i.e. 'You can always live with us' or 'I'll never put you in a home.'
- Don't concentrate on what your parents can't do; focus on maximizing what they can do.

Some do's

- Become educated and aware.
- Understand and accept your feelings.
- Talk with others in your situation.
- Empower your parents.
- Involve your parents.

Think ahead and prepare yourself and your parents for what will happen so when it's all over you can honestly say: "I have done the best that I can." Open communication with your parents is the most powerful tool you have to help ensure you and your parents age gracefully together. It's never too early - or too late - to begin this critical conversation. Reprinted with permission from:

Karen Henderson

Speaker, Educator, Author, Consultant
Founder/CEO

The Long Term Care Planning Network
www.ltcplanningnetwork.com

Do You Know About 8-1-1 Telephone Service?

British Columbians can obtain non-emergency health information any time of the day or night, every day of the year, via the telephone by dialing 8-1-1 or by going to the HealthLink BC website at www.HealthLinkBC.ca. Speak with a nurse about symptoms, consult with a pharmacist about medication questions, or get healthy eating advice from a dietitian. Translation services are available in over 130 languages on request. For deaf and hearing-impaired assistance (TTY), call 7-1-1.

FREE Tele-Workshops

Register by phone 1-866-396-2433 or on-line at www.careringvoice.com

I Feel Like I'm Losing You: The Challenges of Being a Spousal Caregiver

January 31, 2011 6:30 PM – 8 PM (Host Organization: Family Caregivers' Network Society)

Many unique, and often profound, challenges arise when caregiving a spouse or partner. Whether it is a chronic health problem, issues with mobility or decreased cognitive function, as your spouse's condition progresses and you become their caregiver, it can feel more and more like you are losing the person you married. Join other spousal caregivers to identify, share and explore this experience. Learn ways to cope more effectively with these challenges and to treat yourself and others more compassionately.

Caregiver Tax Credits 2010 – Don't Pay Too Much!

**February 10, 2011 7:00 PM and repeated again on February 16, 2011 12:00 PM
(Host Organization: North Shore Community Resources Society)**

When a loved one becomes ill the last thing on your mind is taxes. Despite this fact, taxes are one of the certainties in life but no one should pay more than their fair share! Learn if you are taking advantage of all the deductions and credits available to you including how to:

- claim for medical expenses for yourself and your dependants
- apply for attendant care expense deduction
- claim disability, medical expense and caregiver tax credits

Juggling Everyone's Expectations: The Great Balancing Act

March 3, 2011 6:30 PM – 8 PM (Host Organization: Family Caregivers' Network Society)

Do you feel like you are trying to meet everyone's expectations, including family members, healthcare professionals, your employer and maybe even your own potentially unrealistic ones? In this tele-workshop you will explore the true realities of how to caregiver well. Though everyone's reality is unique there are common themes that frequently arise. Learn how to stop your juggling routine and to navigate through the myriad of expectations placed upon you.

What Is It That You Really Want To Say And Do?

April 6, 2011 6:30 PM – 8 PM (Host Organization: Family Caregivers' Network Society)

We all have an "inner critic" or an "inner guide" that let's us know what to say or what not to say; what to do or what not to do. Join us at this tele-workshop and learn ways to use this "insider" information to benefit you as a family caregiver.



HAPPY NEW YEAR



On behalf of the Caregiver Support Program staff and volunteers, we wish you the very best for 2011!

Raven Song Monthly Caregiver Support Group

**Last Thursday of each month
6:30 pm – 8:00 pm**

**Raven Song Community Health
2450 Ontario Street, Vancouver**

For more information please call:
604-877-4699

Renfrew Monthly Caregiver Support Group

**2nd Tuesday of each month
1pm – 3 pm**

**Renfrew Park Community Centre
2929 East 22nd Ave, Vancouver**

For more information please call:
604-877-4699

NEW SERVICES FOR SENIORS IN RENFREW-COLLINGWOOD

There is a community collaboration to support the development of a new seniors shuttle service, light housekeeping and yard work, information and referrals, and walking clubs in the Renfrew-Collingwood neighbourhood. Walking clubs go out every Monday and shuttle service is available every Friday.

For more info or to book a service, please call Carmen Orquiola at (604) 435-0375 or email carmen@shawbiz.ca.

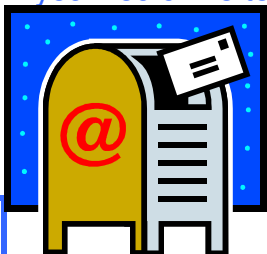
The Glass Seed: The Fragile Beauty of Heart, Mind and Memory

Author: Eileen Delehanty Pearkes
Publisher: Timeless Books
ISBN: 978-1-932018-18-9
Date: 2007

As her mother slowly descends into the abyss of Alzheimer's disease, author Eileen Pearkes finds the means to understanding the deep connection mothers have with their daughters, in spite of memories lost and forgotten. Her exploration of mythic, religious and cultural beliefs surrounding womanhood is expressed thoughtfully and creatively through the imagery of the "seed", which links the beginnings and endings of memory through her relationship with her failing mother. This is a lovely book, filled with passages needing to be read again and again for their subtle beauty. She touched my heart with her words. I recommend this small book for anyone who has a mother.

Book review written by: C.J. (Caregiver living in Vancouver)

If you would like to submit an article, poem or be added to our mailing list to receive our free quarterly newsletter, please phone or send a written or e-mail request to:



**Caregiver Support Program
3425 Crowley Drive Vancouver, BC
V5R 6G3
Tel. (604) 877-4699
E-mail: caregiversupport@vch.ca**



Navigating the Health Care System 101: A Road Map for Family Caregivers

Learn about home and community health resources, eligibility requirements, and how to access services offered by Vancouver Coastal Health.

Thurs. Mar. 3, 2011 (6 pm – 7:30 pm)

Coal Harbor Community Centre: 480 Broughton Street, Vancouver
Pre-registration required: Tel. 604-718-8222

Sat. Mar. 19, 2011 (10 am – 11 am)

Britannia Community Centre: 1661 Napier Street, Vancouver
Pre-registration required: Tel. 604-718-5800

Talking Effectively with Health Care Providers

Taking an active role in your health care or that of a family member can help you get the best care possible from your doctor and other health care professionals. One way to do this is to communicate effectively with your health care team. Learn new tips and skills to help you talk with health care professionals and receive a free booklet that has ideas that have been proven to work. Offered in partnership with Patient Voices Network.

Sat. Feb. 12, 2011 (1pm - 3 pm)

Britannia Community Centre: 1661 Napier Street, Vancouver
Pre-registration required: Tel. 604-718-5800

Supporting Aging Parents and Caregiving Challenges

Knowing where to turn to for help and what resources are available can help relieve anxiety for family members caring for aging parents. This workshop will review some of the general changes and losses that occur with aging and how to manage as a caregiver. Learn about available resources and how to access them.

Wed. Jan. 19, 2011 (6pm - 7:30 pm)

Coal Harbor Community Centre 480 Broughton Street, Vancouver
Pre-registration required: Tel. 604-718-8222

Sat. Jan. 22, 2011 (10am - 11 am)

Britannia Community Centre: 1661 Napier Street, Vancouver
Pre-registration required: Tel. 604-718-5800

Wed. Mar. 9, 2011 (7pm - 8 pm)

Champlain Heights Community Centre: 3350 Maquinna Drive, Vancouver
Pre-registration required: 604-718-6575

Introduction to Long-Term Care Facilities and Housing Options for Seniors

When is it time to consider placement of your family member into a care home? Learn about government funded housing options, eligibility requirements, and how to access long-term care facilities.

Thur. Jan. 27, 2011 (1pm - 2 pm)

Champlain Heights Community Centre: 3350 Maquinna Drive, Vancouver
Pre-registration required: 604-718-6575