

Soar

The Care-ring Voice Network Newsletter



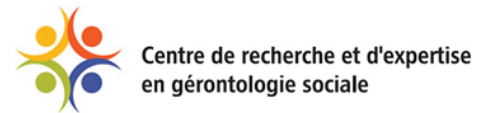
Volume 6, Issue 1
www.careringvoice.com

In this issue of the Soar Newsletter:

- Long distance caregiving
- Balancing work and care
- Pain management

Welcome to our new network partners!

The following organizations have recently joined the Care-ring Voice Network:



*"After the verb To Love...To Help is the most beautiful verb in the world."
(Baroness Von Suttner, Nobel Peace Prize, 1905)*

Long Distance Caring

By Emily Carton

www.caregiver.com

It is not uncommon for families to be separated by great distances. But what happens when one or both parents reach a stage in their lives where they appear to be frail and vulnerable? What can you do to keep from living with an enormous amount of guilt and worry or feeling that helping means sacrificing your own life?

This article will offer a few suggestions as starting points for gaining control of the situation.

Begin by having a thorough assessment of your parent's situation:

- Make sure that what you hear long distance from your parent and about your parent matches the reality of the situation.
- If you are uncertain about the situation and potential risks, consider an assessment by an outside professional who can offer a more objective evaluation: a careful evaluation means taking a close look at the physical, emotional, and social well being of the older person to determine what his/her needs are.
- You can ask the following questions: Is your parent able to prepare meals? Does he/she still have friends and a social life? Are his/her medical needs being met? Is he/she managing his/her own medication? How safe is his/her living situation? Is he/she still able to manage finances? What is his/her state of health? What long term plans need to be made?

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Once you understand the issues, a care plan can be put in place:

- The following questions can help to put this plan in place: Are there people or agencies available that can provide home delivered meals? Are there senior centers where he/she can go? Does he/she have an informal network of people, who can call or look in on him/her? Does he/she have funds to pay for services needed? Is there a friend or a professional who could be an emergency contact? Is relocating to a different environment the best option?

Clearly, there may be a great deal of emotional turmoil, guilt and concern in regards to an aging parent. It is important to remember that if your parent is still able to articulate what he/she wants, and a physician determines that your parent still has the capacity to make his/her own decisions, then it is your parent's decision as to where and how he/she lives.

There are no simple answers or solutions. Each person's situation is different. Each child has a different relationship with his or her parent, and this may also determine the level of your involvement. You need to think about your parent's needs and your own needs as well. You cannot force services upon a parent who is capable of making decisions and willing to live with some level of risk in order to remain at home. However, if your parent is no longer capable, then you need to act. Even if you notice only a small decline, it is not too early to know what resources are available and who might be able to help. You don't need to do it all yourself. Solicit the help of family members and friends, and, if appropriate, find a professional who knows the resources and can help you through the maze of decision making. You do not have to face this alone.

Free tele-learning sessions

Understanding Communication

May 26, 2011, 7:00 PM (PST)

Hosted by the Alzheimer Society of B.C.

[Click here to register](#)

Toronto Caregivers in Search of Community Resources/Support: How do I access...? Who can I Call...?

June 1, 2011, 7:00 PM (EST)

Hosted by Solutions - East Toronto's Health Collaborative (Solutions)

[Click here to register](#)

Bridges to the Future - CSIL Webinar

June 22, 2011, 5:00 PM (PST)

Hosted by Muscular Dystrophy Canada

[Click here to register](#)

Self-care and Wellness: What About Me?

June 22, 2011, 7:00 PM (EST)

Hosted by Solutions - East Toronto's Health Collaborative (Solutions)

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Balancing Work and Care

MyCareJourney.com

More and more of us are doing it. Research shows that 32 percent of Canadian workers are caring for elderly family members, and the majority of caregivers take time off work to do so. In fact, 15 percent of sandwiched workers had to reduce their hours to look after a loved one. One in four working Canadians experiences high levels of caregiver strain. Four types of caregiver stress have been defined: emotional (e.g., anxiety, emotional exhaustion), physical, financial, and family strain.

So what can a working caregiver do? While each situation is different, there are some common steps you can take:

- First, be realistic about the recipient's care requirements and, equally important, be realistic about how much help you can provide. Will the caregiving be a short-term activity or will it be a long-term commitment?

- Second, consider the following questions to determine what you can do to make your home or work life easier:

What would make your home life easier?

- Can other family members share the caregiving responsibilities?
- Can other family members assist with household responsibilities?
- Can you afford to hire a paid caregiver?
- Have you contacted your local government care agency to discuss respite care?
- Are there adult day programs in your neighbourhood that can accommodate your parent?
- Have you had a family meeting to discuss concerns and brainstorm solutions of where help can be provided and who can provide what and when?
- Have you considered your parent's present and future needs?
- Have you spoken to the care recipient to learn what they want?
- Has he or she seen a specialist? Can you obtain more information on their condition to anticipate future care needs (e.g., issues of mobility, climbing stairs, cognitive decline, etc)?

What would make your work life easier?

- Have you spoken to a supervisor to share your concerns? Remember, everyone has a parent and we all get older.
- Have you chatted with your human resources department? An employee assistance program may be available to help you locate resources and provide confidential counselling.
- Are flexible hours an option?
- Is reducing your hours possible?
- Is taking a leave of absence an option?
- Is job sharing possible?
- Is working from home an option?
- Are you able to reduce travel time or say no to overtime hours?
- Is quitting your job the answer? Make sure you understand your financial reserves and the costs involved.

To help you determine your needs, sit down with a counsellor or another professional who can objectively outline your options. If you need help assessing your loved one's current and future needs, speak with their medical specialist, family doctor or a geriatric care manager who can assist you in exploring resources and alternatives.

No decision is final

When balancing work and care, remember that no decision is final. The choice lies with you. Finding a balance is not easy. Try to set aside some time for yourself, and keep it as a repeating occurrence in your calendar. Also, consider joining a support group. Above all, remember that your health is paramount. After all, if you don't take care of yourself, you might require your own caregiver!

Free tele-learning sessions

Tele-Support Group

May 24, 2011, 7:00 PM (EST)

Hosted by AMI Quebec (Action on Mental Illness)

[Click here to register](#)

Meaning of Caregiving: Why Am I Doing This?

June 8, 2011, 7:00 PM (EST)

Hosted by Solutions - East Toronto's Health Collaborative (Solutions)

[Click here to register](#)

Coping with Change: Am I Going Out of My Mind...?

June 15, 2011, 7:00 PM (EST)

Hosted by Solutions - East Toronto's Health Collaborative (Solutions)

[Click here to register](#)

Managing Pain

By Ryan Goodwin, Community Liaison

Grand Rapids Home Health Care, Inc.

www.CaregiverResource.net

Pain amongst older adults is often left untreated or underdiagnosed. As caregivers, we may not recognize or address pain with our loved ones as much as we should. Therefore, the intent of this article is to increase awareness of pain management. Although medications are the most prevalent methods used to relieve pain, in this article we will focus on the lesser known alternative pain management methods.

By educating ourselves in assisting our loved ones in managing pain, we take the first step. You can take a comprehensive approach with the following suggestions:

- **Distraction:** when our loved ones focus on the level of pain they are experiencing, it is hard to see the forest for the trees. Focus can make the pain feel worse than it really is. Many of us have seen this hold true with ourselves and especially our children. So try to promote a favourite activity to help shift our loved ones' focus away from their pain.

- **Reduce stress:** studies suggest that stress is directly linked to immune function and disease. As we increase negative feelings in our mind such as anxiety, depression, and stress, our bodies will increase the level of pain we feel. Enjoyable activities, meditation, prayer, calming music, and other muscular relaxation methods can assist our loved ones with stress reduction.

- **Exercise:** endorphins are natural, feel-good chemicals that are shown to improve our moods and help block pain receptors in our body. These chemicals are released during meditation, the consumption of chocolate or spicy peppers, during acupuncture or massage, and most commonly during exercise. We strongly urge you to consult your loved one's physician before beginning an exercise routine to discuss an exercise program that may benefit an individual with a disability.

- **Join a support group or discuss counselling:** many of you may already say my loved one can't exercise, reduce stress, or perform activities, however, simply talking to others that are in the same boat can reduce levels of pain.

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- Finally...hope: hope is a powerful word that is associated with positive thinking, optimism, and encouragement. The influential connection between mind and body should not go ignored and has shown a relationship in reducing physical and psychological symptoms in many conditions. Hope gives us a light at the end of the tunnel and can influence a positive journey to a preferred destination. If you are successful in instilling hope within your loved ones, you just might be pleasantly surprised by the positive outcomes.

Free tele-learning sessions

Preventing Compassion Fatigue

June 15, 2011, 6:30 PM (PST)

Host Organization: Family Caregivers' Network Society.

[Click here to register](#)

**For more information about other tele-learning sessions,
please visit our website <http://www.careringvoice.com/tele-learning.php>**