



The Family Caregivers' Grapevine

March/April 2011

A bi-monthly newsletter published by the
**North Shore Supporting Family Caregivers
Across the Lifespan Project**

Preparing for an Emergency Department Visit

Adapted from the Resource Guide for Family Caregivers: North Shore Edition

Taking a loved one to the emergency department is an unpleasant, but inevitable, part of caregiving. Planning ahead for the emergency department visit can help to make the experience a bit less hectic and stressful for you and your loved one.

Keep your local emergency numbers in an easily accessible location (for example, on the refrigerator or by the telephone). Figure out where the closest emergency department is, its phone number, and directions for how to get there.

If your loved one needs urgent assistance, call 911 for an ambulance immediately. Tell the 911 dispatcher your loved one's current location, the nature of the medical emergency as well as whether your loved one is awake (conscious), breathing, or bleeding. Make sure you inform the dispatcher of your loved one's age and whether he or she has any sort of dementia or other cognitive impairment. If your loved one is unable to speak for him or herself or if you are unable to drive to the hospital yourself, try to ride in the ambulance. If you can, have a friend drive you to the hospital. Otherwise follow the ambulance to the hospital in your car.

As a caregiver, you know what normal behaviour is for your loved one and can communicate that information to hospital staff. To help you communicate this information clearly and concisely, it is helpful to prepare an emergency room kit that includes a photocopy of your loved one's care card, a summary of your loved one's medical history, including any allergies and a complete list of prescription and over-the-counter medications he or she is currently taking, a list of emergency contacts (including his or her family doctor, any specialists who are routinely involved in his or her care, and his or her next of kin), as well as copies of all legal or health-related documents, such as a Power of Attorney, Representation Agreement or Advance Care Plan. Packing a change of clothing, toiletries, and your loved one's glasses, dentures, and hearing or walking aids, is also helpful.

Although an emergency department visit is undeniably a stressful experience for both you and your loved one, by planning ahead, you can make the process run more smoothly and help ensure your loved one receives the best possible care from hospital staff.



Legally Speaking: Talking about Declining Health, Incapacity and Dying

By: Jackie Morris



Jackie Morris,
North Shore Lawyer

Although it is common for people to write a Will so that family members know their wishes, many feel uncomfortable or don't want to talk to their family about personal and medical care decisions for end-of-life. They may assume that everyone involved has the same views as they do or there may be cultural barriers to talking about the loss of abilities or death. However, it is difficult for a family member to know exactly what medical treatments a person would want or not want at end-of-life if that person is unable to communicate that information for his or herself.

The Fraser Health Authority has prepared a document to assist you with talking about future healthcare decisions with your family or trusted friends. The document is a workbook called "My Voice" which leads you through a number of gentle steps with the goal of arriving at some decisions about future healthcare which can be recorded in the workbook. This is known as an **Advance Care Plan**. "My Voice" has been adopted by the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority (which includes the North Shore). The decisions which are summarized in an Advance Care Plan include:

- Who can make healthcare decisions for you if you are incapable (these decisions are always yours up to that point)
- Whether you want life support (medical interventions which may include the insertion of a feeding tube or cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR)) which might prolong your life or delay your death
- Whether you want to receive medications to relieve your pain, even if such medications might hasten your death

You can summarize your decisions in a Living Will which may be easier for others to understand when the time comes. A Living Will has no particular wording. Samples are available on the Internet. Make sure to date and sign it. It is important to note that neither the "My Voice" workbook nor a Living Will are legally binding for your family or health care providers, but are strong guide as your family or health care providers should respect your values, wishes, and beliefs.

While the workbook indicates that you can use them to appoint the person you want to make medical and personal care decisions for you, that choice is not legally binding. If, for instance, you choose one of your children, your other children still have the legal right to make decisions for you.

For more information on advance care planning and to access the workbook "My Voice", visit http://www.fraserhealth.ca/your_care/future_health_care_decisions/my_voice_workbook

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Legally Speaking: Talking about Declining Health, Incapacity and Dying

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A **Representation Agreement** is the document which provides for a legally binding appointment. It is usually combined with a Living Will. A Representation Agreement must be prepared by a lawyer. You should have a Representative Agreement if:

- You do not have a capable close relative (spouse or child);
- You have married more than once and your current spouse and/or children have different opinions about your care; or
- There are philosophical or religious differences within your family

Please note that as of September 1, 2011 there will be legislative changes regarding the types of legal documents that you can make for a time when you are unable to make your own healthcare decisions. Although discussions about your wishes for future healthcare at end-of-life are challenging, going through the process of discussing and recoding your future healthcare wishes will give both you and your family peace of mind.

Free Legal Advice and Referral Clinics are available on Thursdays between 9 am and 11 am at the Silver Harbour Community Centre (144 East 22nd Street). You can sign up at the front desk of Silver Harbour for a confidential 30 minute appointment. Other free legal advice clinics are also available on the North Shore. Call North Shore Community Resources for more details at 604-985-7138.



“SpeakUp - Start the Conversation About End of Life Care” is a national campaign to promote advance care planning activities across the country. This April 12th is National Advance Care Planning Day, a day for Canadians to think about and discuss their choices for healthcare at end-of-life with family and/or trusted friends. Resources will be available to help you understand advance care planning, have discussions about your future healthcare choices, and make those wishes known by creating an Advance Care Plan. The SpeakUp website will be launched in early March. In the meantime, contact gfernie@bruyere.org for more information.

Visit the Family Caregiver Resource Library!

The library has many great books, videos, and CDs for family caregivers. Sign out these resources, free of charge, for up to three weeks. The library is located at:

**North Shore Community Resources, Capilano Mall, 2nd Floor
Hours: Monday to Friday, 9:00am to 4:30pm**

For more information, contact Karyn at 604-982-3320.





Understanding and Navigating the Health Care System

Adapted from the Resource Guide for Family Caregivers: North Shore Edition

Seniors' One-Stop

Seniors' One-Stop is a program located at North Shore Community Resources that provides seniors with information and referrals to a wide range of resources and services. Seniors' One-Stop also publishes the "North Shore Guide to Services for Seniors" which provides a directory of community resources for a variety of areas.

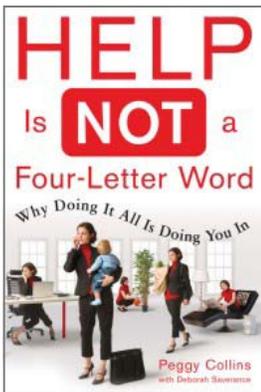


To receive a copy of the "North Shore Guide to Services for Seniors", please call North Shore Community Resources at (604) 983-3303 or (604) 925-7474 or visit us on the second floor of Capilano Mall (935 Marine Drive). A donation is appreciated!

Provides information and referrals to resources and services for:

- Finances
- Health and support services
 - Counselling and support (including caregiver support)
 - Medical clinics, equipment and supplies
 - Vancouver Coastal Health programs and services
 - Disease-specific organizations
- Housing
- Meal programs and shopping
- Personal security
- Education programs
- Social and recreation programs
- Transportation

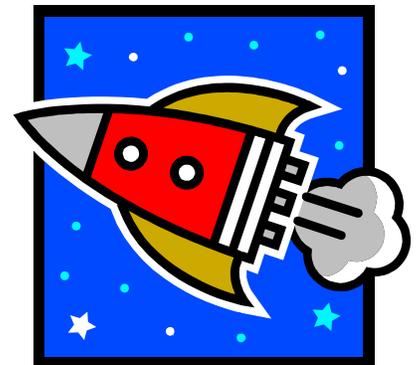
Review: "Help is Not a Four Letter Word" by Peggy Collins (2006)



Are you constantly trying to "do it all" by yourself? Do you avoid delegating work because you don't trust others to "do it right"? If you answered yes to either of these questions, "Help is Not a Four Letter Word" by Peggy Collins may be right for you. In this book, Collins discusses how when taken to the extreme, self-sufficiency can lead to behaviours and attitudes that will leave you feeling overwhelmed, exhausted and unsatisfied. This book will help you to recognize that there is no prize for doing it alone and that cooperation and collaboration will help you achieve balance and enjoy your life more fully.

Your Daily Dose of Laughter!

When NASA first started sending up astronauts, they quickly discovered that ballpoint pens would not work in zero gravity. To combat the problem, NASA scientists spent a decade and \$12 billion to develop a pen that writes in zero gravity, upside down, underwater, on almost any surface including glass, and at temperatures ranging from below freezing to 300°C ...the Russians just used a pencil!





Driving and Dementia

By: Kendra Jones

Driving is a complex activity that requires quick reactions, good judgment, the ability to divide and maintain attention, and to recall the rules of the road. Alzheimer's disease and other dementias can influence an individual's ability to drive safely. However, a diagnosis of dementia does not necessarily mean the individual has to hang his or her up keys immediately. Depending on the timing of the diagnosis and the progression of the disease, some people with dementia are able to continue driving.

However, the individual's ability to drive must be monitored throughout the course of the disease by the individual, friends and family, as well as a doctor or other health care professional.

Once the dementia becomes severe enough, the individual will have to stop driving. It is usually up to the individual's family and friends to broach this difficult subject with the individual as he or she may be unaware of his or her unsafe driving practices. Studies show that caregivers are able to provide a better assessment of the individual's driving abilities than the individual can. Friends and family can look for the following signs as an indication that an individual with dementia is having trouble driving:

- Missing stop signs or traffic lights, having trouble with merging or changing lanes
- Getting in a collision, receiving a traffic ticket, or accidentally damaging the car
- Mixing up the gas and brake pedal, losing his or her way, or forgetting where he or she is going or where his or her car is parked

If the individual will not voluntarily stop driving, friends or family may have to intervene. Forcing someone with dementia to stop driving is a hard thing for friends and family to do and the situation must be handled with sensitivity. Having the news delivered by an objective third-party (such as a doctor) may help the individual to accept the need to stop driving.

If the individual is still able to drive, it is important to plan ahead for the time when he or she can no longer drive safely. Talk to the person about when driving is needed and why. Once these needs have been identified, you can discuss what alternatives are available. This could include public transit, driving services provided by friends and family or community organizations, or taxis. Have an honest conversation with the individual to prepare for potential challenges down the road and to keep them (and others on the road) safe. Stay tuned for the next edition of the Family Caregivers' Grapevine for a more in-depth article on practical steps that you can take when it is time for your loved one to stop driving.



DID YOU KNOW?

In 2008, it cost about \$9,000 a year to keep a car on the road. You can buy about 450 cab rides for \$9,000. That's more than one \$20 cab ride a day!



Stressed Out? Just Breathe!

By: Kendra Jones

Family caregivers may experience higher levels of stress due to their caregiving responsibilities. When you are stressed, your breathing tends to be quick and shallow which can also lead to tight, tense muscles, particularly in the neck and shoulders. Regardless of what else is going on in your life, taking a minute or two to stretch and breathe will help you release some of that tension and to be more calm, centred, and relaxed!

Deep breathing requires you to be mindful of your breath and consciously focus on expanding your lungs inside your chest. Try placing your right hand on your chest and left hand on your stomach. If you are breathing deeply, your left hand should rise and fall with each breath and there should be little or no movement of your right hand. Close your eyes and take long, slow, and regular breaths in through your nose and out through your mouth. Some people like to visualize a warm, white light entering their body with each inward breath.

The idea of deep breathing can also be found in yoga. If you are looking for a yoga class to try, Hatha yoga is a beginner-friendly, slow-paced stretching class. However, you don't need a formal class to start yoga. Maybe you can't afford it right now or you can't make it out to a class. You can try yoga at home with a yoga video from the library or on the internet. At the very least, try to take some time for yourself to breathe deeply and stretch out any tense muscles. You'll be glad you did!

WANT TO TRY A YOGA CLASS?

The John Braithewaite Centre offers a variety of yoga courses that are designed for older adults and cater to a variety of different health and fitness levels (including for those with chronic disease). For more information, call the JBCC at 604-982-8300.

TRY THESE STRETCHES AT HOME! Adapted from www.livingwordsofwisdom.com

FORWARD BEND



Breathe in. Breathe out as you bend forward and let your head and arms hang over your knees. Relax into the position and hold for a few seconds while breathing normally. Breathe in as you slowly come back up to seated position.

SPINAL TWISTS



Sit facing forward place your left hand on the outside of your right knee. Place your right arm over the back of the chair. Breathe in. Breathe out as you twist to the right. Turn your head as well. You can push against your right knee to create more leverage. Hold the position while breathing normally. Release slowly and come back to facing forward. Repeat on the opposite side.

LEG LIFTS



Sit and hold each side of the chair for balance. Make sure your back is supported against the back of the chair. Breathe out. Breathe in as you lift your straightened left leg and flex your foot. Hold for a few seconds and then slowly breathe out while lowering your leg. Repeat for your right leg.



Cooking Under Pressure

By: Kendra Jones

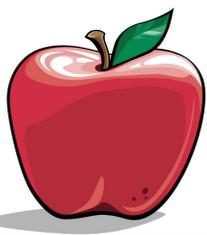
Preparing nutritious meals for you and your loved one can be challenging, particularly if you are responsible for planning meals for more than one household. Given your other responsibilities, you may not have the time or energy to cook healthy meals. However, eating a balanced diet is important for you and your loved one to maintain your health and well-being.

Plan your meals ahead of time and use your meal plan to make a shopping list for the week. At the grocery store, try to stick to the perimeter of the store where the healthier foods are located. An added bonus is that these fresh foods tend to be less expensive than their processed and pre-packaged counterparts!

Keep a supply of healthy frozen or canned food if you cannot make it out to the grocery store for any reason. It will also cut down on your preparation time since you don't have to clean or chop the food. You can also arrange to have groceries delivered or join a weekly grocery shuttle for transportation to and from the store. Alternatively, pre-made meals can be delivered to your home for a small fee. Contact Seniors' One-Stop (604-983-3303 or 604-925-7474) for a list of organizations on the North Shore that offer this service.

Recipes that can be made in larger quantities and frozen in individual sized portions are great for when you do not have the time or energy to prepare a meal. Stews, casseroles and curries can be split into small containers or freezer bags and freeze well. Make sure you reheat the food until it's steaming hot all the way through.

Try to mix up your food choices to keep meals interesting. You



can find new, healthy recipe options online or at your local library. As the French author Voltaire once wrote, "Nothing would be more tiresome than eating and drinking if [they were not] a pleasure as well as a necessity". Mixing it up in the kitchen can be both easy and delicious, even when you are "cooking under pressure". Bon appétit!

TEN FOODS YOU SHOULDN'T DO WITHOUT

- 1. Oatmeal** is a great source of fibre and helps to lower cholesterol.
- 2. Eggs** are a low-calorie food which are packed with 13 essential vitamins and minerals.
- 3. Yogurt** is high in calcium which helps prevent weak bones. Probiotic yogurt can also be helpful in preventing digestive problems.
- 4. Blueberries** are high in antioxidants.
- 5. Apples...**as the saying goes, an apple a day keeps the doctor away! The pectin in apples may also help control blood sugar.
- 6. Fish** is a low-fat, high-protein source of nutrients. Fatty fish, such as salmon, may also help to improve heart health.
- 7. Chicken** is a high-protein meat choice with almost half the fat of many red meats.
- 8. Broccoli** is a great source of vitamins K, C, E, and B, as well as calcium and iron.
- 9. Sweet Potatoes, squash, or carrots** contain high levels of beta-carotene which can help to keep skin, hair, and eyes healthy.
- 10. Rice** is a complex carbohydrate which means it digests slowly and allows the body to use the energy released over a longer period of time.

The Family Caregivers' Grapevine is a bi-monthly publication intended to support family caregivers by promoting the importance of self-care while providing practical information and resources.

If you have any questions or feedback about the newsletter, please contact the editor at:
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**North Shore
Community Resources**

Connecting You to Community Services!

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The Supporting Caregivers Across the Lifespan Project

The Supporting Caregivers Across the Lifespan Project works in partnership with the North Shore Caregiver Support Program. Together we provide a wide variety of educational workshops, caregiver support and resources for family and friends supporting someone with an illness or disability.

The Project provides:

- Education sessions for family caregivers
- Social recreation programs
- Expressive arts programming
- Tele-learning education sessions for family caregivers (educational workshops over the phone)
- Education for professionals working with family caregivers
- Education for employers

Additional activities provided by the Caregiver Support Program:

- Family Caregiver Network groups
- Stress management and relaxation workshops
- Telephone support and individual consultation
- Educational workshops
- Information and referral to community services
- Library with books, videos, and other educational resources

Are you a family caregiver?

You are if you provide a family member or friend who is chronically ill, elderly, palliative or living with a disability with **any** of the following types of assistance:

- **Personal Care:** dressing, bathing, eating
- **Household Work:** house cleaning, shopping/errands, preparing meals, yard work
- **Coordination of Care:** transportation, appointments, arranging services, visiting
- **Support:** phone check-in, supervision, emotional support
- **Nursing Care:** medication, changing dressings

You're not alone.

We're here to help.

For more information, contact Helen at 604-988-3313 or helen.wait@nscr.bc.ca.