



Conversation with a caregiver

by Josie Padro

Every caregiver is unique as is every caregiving situation. In recognition of this we have started a series of interviews with some of our caregivers.

In our first interview Josie spoke with Katy, a caregiver, counsellor and artist.

J: Who are you caring for?

K: I've been caring for my mother for many years and also recently my husband.

J: What kind of things do you do for your mother and your husband?

K: Starting with my mother: picking her up, picking up prescriptions, taking her to doctors. I take her to the hospital for blood tests. She has so many different [health] matters. I also help her at her house. I live on the North Shore; she lives in Vancouver. She loves Persian groceries so I buy her some special foods.

I recently I took her to Iran because I found out she was kind of depressed, not seeing her son and grandchildren. It was a really big step for me leaving behind my career, my husband and family.

I'm the only one here for her so I provide companionship, sometimes planning together for preparation of meals, light housekeeping, I help her. I take her to some activities to the library to get some Persian books and in winter I take her swimming.

J: With all the things that you do for your husband and your mother, what kind of impact does it have on you physically and emotionally?

K: I'm a very active person. Like I go to the gym, I go hiking with friends twice a week. I go swimming. I take care of myself and I get break sometimes when I need to. I do sculpting - I enjoy art – it's my passion.

J: What kind of positive things do you get from caregiving?

K: With my mother, it's a big reward for me, a bonding experience. It can be sometimes stressful but it's a good message for me to pass on to my children - respecting your mother. When my husband and I go for vacation, my girls [take on the caregiving role] for my mother. I'm impressed and I'm happy about this. When my husband ended up in hospital, I

was there for one week with him and I felt they handled it so well.

It's hard for a when a spouse requires round the clock assistance. It can even become dangerous if the spouse-caregiver has his or her own health issue to deal with. Those problems can be made worse by the stress of caregiving and also lack of attention to the caregivers own needs.