

May/June 2021

THE GRAPEVINE

North Shore Caregivers Newsletter



THE JOY OF KNITTING

Written by Melissa Wade

In the early phases of the pandemic, when we were in full lockdown, I decided to take up knitting. Admittedly, learning to knit was not relaxing at first - it was frustrating - but quickly it became a meditative practice for me. There is something calming in the repetitive motion and rhythm of knitting. After a few weeks of knitting, I began to notice that I felt really happy while knitting and that the happiness effect lingered. The impact of knitting on my mood during the lockdown made me wonder if there was any research on the mental health benefits of knitting. I was surprised to find that there was.

The Joy Of Knitting cont.

According to research, some of the benefits of knitting include:

- Lowered blood pressure
- Reduced depression and anxiety
- Increased sense of wellbeing
- Slowed onset of dementia
- Distraction from chronic pain
- Reduced loneliness and isolation

There are a few reasons why researchers believe that knitting may reduce depression, anxiety and chronic pain. One theory is based on animal research and posits that repetitive motions trigger a release in serotonin. Serotonin is a hormone that plays an important role in mood regulation. If we don't have enough serotonin, we may feel more anxious or depressed. However, the right amount can produce feelings of well-being and calmness. Another theory is that knitting keeps us present and that when we are present we worry less about the future and ruminate less about the past. Knitting can also create a sense of purpose, meaning and accomplishment, which contributes positively to our overall sense of well-being. Knitting keeps our hands busy which can provide a distraction our thoughts and from chronic pain.

In terms of slowing the onset of dementia, knitting works on hand-eye-coordination which can create "a neuroprotective reserve" against dementia. Research also suggests a connection between depression and stress and Alzheimer's and knitting has been shown to combat both stress and depression. Because knitting can induce feelings of well-being and keeps your mind and body occupied, it may help to combat feelings of loneliness, and isolation. Knitting can also be social (remember knitting circles?)

Physical and mental health benefits aside, knitting brings me joy because it allows me to be creative.

In the July edition of the Grapevine, we will announce details of our caregiver and care recipient knitting circle. If you think you and the person you are caring for might want to join the knitting circle, please contact the Caregiver Support Program Coordinator, Melissa Wade to register in advance. You are also welcome to join without the person you are caring for: melissa.wade@nscr.ca or 604-982-3320

References:

<https://mhanational.org/blog/mental-health-benefits-knitting>
<http://www.stitchlinks.com/pdfsNewSite/research/Poster%20British%20Pain%20Society%20March%202009%20copy.pdf>
<https://sheepandstitch.com/6-unexpected-benefits-of-knitting/>
<https://www.hormone.org/your-health-and-hormones/glands-and-hormones-a-to-z/hormones/serotonin#:~:text=Serotonin%20is%20the%20key%20hormone,sleeping%2C%20eating%2C%20and%20digestion>
<https://www.health-magazine.co.uk/post/2020/03/21/knitting-can-reduce-feelings-of-loneliness-and-isolation>

MAY EVENTS

TUES, MAY 04

**CAREGIVER YOGA ON ZOOM (DROP-IN EVERY TUESDAY UNTIL JUNE 29TH)
TIME: 11:30-12:30PM**

**ONLINE CAREGIVER MEETING (DROP-IN)
TIME: 6:30-8:30PM**

THURS, MAY 06

**MEN'S GROUP ON ZOOM (REGISTRATION REQUIRED)
TIME: 1:00-3:00PM**

**PLEASE CONTACT PAT DEAN TO REGISTER:
P.DEAN123@HOTMAIL.COM**

THURS, MAY 13

**WEBINAR: NAVIGATING SENIOR CARE IN A COVID-CHANGED WORLD
TIME: 10:00-11 AM
TO REGISTER CONTACT:
MELISA WADE
MELISSA.WADE@NSCR.CA**

MON, MAY 17

**PERSIAN CAREGIVER MEETING ON ZOOM (DROP-IN)
TIME: 4:00-6:00PM**

**TO REGISTER CONTACT:
MELISA WADE
MELISSA.WADE@NSCR.CA**

WED, MAY 19

**BEREAVEMENT GROUP
10:30-12:30PM**

**TO REGISTER CONTACT:
MELISA WADE
MELISSA.WADE@NSCR.CA**

JUNE EVENTS

TUES, JUNE 01

**CAREGIVER YOGA ON ZOOM (DROP-IN EVERY TUESDAY UNTIL JUNE 29TH)
TIME: 11:30-12:30PM**

**ONLINE CAREGIVER MEETING (DROP-IN)
TIME: 6:30-8:30PM**

THURS, JUNE 03

**MEN'S GROUP ON ZOOM (REGISTRATION REQUIRED)
TIME: 1:00-3:00PM**

**PLEASE CONTACT PAT DEAN TO REGISTER:
P.DEAN123@HOTMAIL.COM.**

MON, JUNE 21

**PERSIAN CAREGIVER MEETING ON ZOOM (DROP-IN)
TIME: 4:00-6:00PM**

**TO REGISTER CONTACT:
MELISA WADE
MELISSA.WADE@NSCR.CA**

WED, JUNE 30

**BEREAVEMENT GROUP
10:30-12:30PM**

**TO REGISTER CONTACT:
MELISA WADE
MELISSA.WADE@NSCR.CA**

WED, JUNE 23

**DEATH AND DYING WORKSHOP SERIES ON ZOOM (REGISTRATION REQUIRED)
TIME: 1:00-2PM
DATES JUNE 23, JUNE 30, JULY 7, JULY 14, JULY 21**

**TO REGISTER CONTACT:
MELISSA WADE
MELISSA.WADE@NSCR.CA**

The Importance of Nourishing Yourself as a Caregiver

What feeds you as a caregiver? What are you passionate about? What makes you feel more connected to yourself, invigorated, or at peace?

Although these questions sound like they should have big answers, there are many small ways that you can nourish yourself as a caregiver. In honour of caregiver awareness month this May, this edition of the Grapevine Newsletter offers suggestions on small ways that caregivers can fill their caregiver cup.



Recently, we found out that one of the caregivers in our caregiver community finds solace in painting rocks. She was kind enough to share her thoughts on what nourishes her and the importance of connecting with herself through her hobbies and interests:

My name is Ruth, I am a long distance caregiver-part of a team of siblings endeavouring to meet the ever changing needs of a fiercely independent 97 year old Mother who lives alone. Three of the siblings live in the same city as Mom and the other two live 3000 miles away.

According to Gabor Mate, "We all need to be seen, heard, understood and loved. Only when we experience connection to ourselves can we open up to our own vulnerability and discover and express what is true for us,"

I have found that connection to self in a few hobbies.

I started painting on rocks at the beginning of the pandemic when we were asked to stay at home, stay in our communities, and share messages of hope and encouragement - perhaps on rocks to be scattered throughout the neighbourhood. Too shy to share, I just kept painting and piling. Little did I know I'd still be painting over a year later. I've amassed quite a collection!

Painting calms and comforts me. It reduces my stress.

The Importance of Nourishing Yourself As A Caregiver cont.

Painting enhances my self esteem. I am no Van Gogh, but I am often surprised by what I can produce.

Painting draws me inward and back to that all important "self" so often forgotten and neglected when we are kept engaged looking outward seeing to the needs of others. Sometimes out of necessity, I know.



"Painting reminds me to be playful and gets me out of my head for a while."

I also like to collect poems that speak to me. I print them out and keep them handy to read and memorize.

Some of my favourites are:

- Think Like A Tree by Karen I. Shragg
- Now I Become Myself by May Sarton
- The Thing is... by Ellen Bass

I keep a journal of quotes I like. I like this particular one right now:

"We are all just walking each other home." - Ram Dass

I also find solace and connection in reading, knitting, listening to music, baking and walking while being aware of nature.

Always Stay on the Bright Side of Life: Finding Meaning and the Art of the Life Review

Written By C.A. Bryson

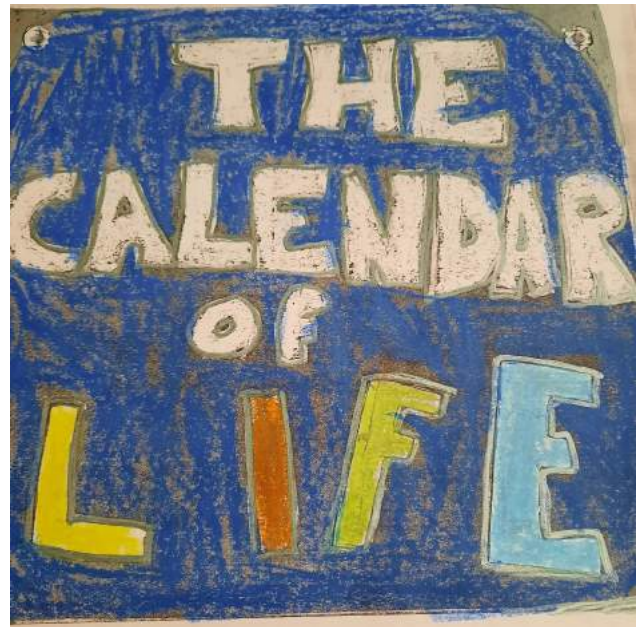
'Always look on the bright side of life...
If life seems jolly rotten
There's something you've forgotten
And that's to laugh and smile
And dance and sing...
When you're feeling in the dumps
Don't be silly chumps
Just purse your lips and whistle...'

'Always Stay on the Bright Side of Life' from: Monty Python's 'Life of Brian'
1979

I don't know why, but when I set out to write about the art of the Life Review I straight away thought of the film Monty Python's 'Life of Brian'. Though in retrospect, it does seem like the reason I turn to memory and reminiscence so much is because I'm trying to find the meaning in my life.

Three years ago I wrote a memoir. I wrote it for myself, but also my family. I wanted to tell the truth about my life, to be honest about my life, (warts and all), in the hope that by sharing my truth, my family just might understand me better and get a picture of who I am. And not only that, but to tell the truth as a means of seeking justice and redemption. So I ended up taking two courses on the art of writing a memoir: one at Capilano University and one with Joyce Maynard through Great Courses.

So now I have the tools. And so will you, though not in this article, but in a follow up one I will write in early summer.



But even if you don't want to write a whole memoir (which can seem like a daunting task), there are lots of other forms of remembering besides writing a memoir.

In this article I'll discuss, primarily, the art of the Life Review. A person can write a Life Review without necessarily producing a memoir. (A life review is the process of recollecting our lives either orally or in writing whereas a memoir is one potential autobiographical artistic product of which there are many.) But first I should tell you straight out—just what is the Life Review, and where does that idea come from?

Life Reviews we've always been doing, in our heads, since Home Sapiens existed. More recently, was St Augustine of Hippo, who wrote his famous 'Confessions' in 400 A.D. (about the same time as the Fall of Rome.) As a species we have a deep yearning not only to tell stories, but to tell our own stories. However, the concept of 'Life Review' did not come into existence until gerontologist Robert Butler coined the term in the 1960s, along with psychologist Erik Erikson's work on human development. Essentially, Life Review means:

Always Stay On the Bright Side of Life... cont.

'The art of coming to terms with everything that happened in that individual's past.'

Author Dr. Connie Zweig quotes, in her essay: 'How To Do a Life Review to Find Your Soul's Mission: An Essential Step to Becoming An Elder'

'We live life forward but understand it backward.' - Kierkegaard

It is undeniably true that if we tell our stories, the whole story, without holding back, we are released from the 'hold' of the past, and therefore, achieve greater peace of mind.

As bell hooks (lower case letters intentional, this is how the writer writes her name) wrote: 'Not to forget the past but break its hold.'

What could prompt an individual to do this time-intensive, somewhat emotional work? Zweig suggests the following:

- A sudden serious illness (mortality awareness)
- Retirement (self-reflection)
- Becoming a grandparent (leaving a legacy)
- Emotional repair (coming to terms with negative events)
- To find acceptance and gratitude (the wisdom of the Inner Elder)

Taken together with loosening the 'hold' of the past, Butler believed that by creating a Life Review, it is possible to reframe negative events in our lives as turning points that lead to personal growth (rather like the idea of 'Post-Traumatic Growth, versus Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.)

For me, right up there in the top 50 positive experiences in my life (I highly recommend you make your own Top 50 list), is the night I dotted the last 'I' on the last page of a memoir I wrote 4 years ago, that actually wrote itself.

In addition, by writing a life-review (or memoir), you are able to integrate seemingly random events into a coherent story. This story helps the storyteller find meaning and a greater sense of where they 'fit' in the cosmos. By completing a Life Review we can obtain valuable insights into ourselves, our relationships, and our work.

You might be wondering when I'm going to get to the 'meat and potatoes' aspect of writing a Life Review. The thing is this article is just the 'first course'. The main course, the nuts and bolts of creating a Life Review, will come in the following issue of Grapevine. So stay tuned...

I might end this piece by mentioning that there is an increasing body of evidence proving that life story work is an effective treatment for depressive symptoms in older adults and actually promotes greater well-being. This doesn't surprise me. Telling one's story and being 'heard' is inherently therapeutic, no matter how one chooses to tell our story (which is the subject of my next piece.) A Summer Project, if you will. And since we're all spending more time indoors, what better way to spend it than by getting those creative juices flowing, like a full-bodied red wine? Let the good weather be your muse. With the ripening of fruit and the blossoming of flowers, may you find growth in your own life, and may you harvest the fruits of your growth in the sobering days of autumn. Isn't that what summer is for, just letting the young 'dog' in us off its leash (safely)? And just roam, and take in the sights and smells of summer.

(Note on image: front page of a homemade calendar I made for a friend in 1990. Like fine wines, sometimes old pieces can be unearthed years later and savoured.)

Tackling the Digital Divide for Seniors

Written By Stephanie Chan



According to a new BC Hydro report, titled “Digital divide: COVID-19 pushes B.C. seniors to close technology gap, but challenges persist,” more seniors are online than ever before, but there is still a big knowledge gap that hinders them in maximizing the use of their devices. Keeping up with technology is a struggle we can all relate to. Most of us know how to do a certain number of things online, but what we know how to do represents only a small fraction of what’s actually possible, so there is lots to learn!

How can the internet help us in our lives and what is it exactly that keeps us from making the most out of what technology has to offer? Just a few benefits the internet can provide: it can deliver important information and news, we can learn new skills, it can entertain us, it can allow us to connect and socialize with others, and it can make our lives easier. Some of us may know how to find a news website, or maybe we already have a Facebook account or know how to use Zoom.

But making online purchases, submitting our credit card information or doing online banking may be scarier. Are we opening ourselves to identity fraud? How is information stored in the “cloud” and who can access it?

Knowledge and confidence are the two key elements to living a technology-enhanced life. Both can come from getting the right help initially from someone you trust (family member, instructor, etc.) and then simply practicing. Having the right knowledge is important. For example, knowing the signs of a dangerous website, or a fraudulent email that seems to be from a trusted organization, can help you avoid a huge headache later. And then certain things just require practice, like taking a photo and making some finishing edits to make it look perfect.

For those who may be interested in getting some one-on-one help, we at myCareBase have partnered with a senior tech educator with over 20 years experience in helping seniors master their tech skills. We’re offering a special promotion of a first 30 minute lesson free! Contact stephanie@mycarebase.com to learn more.

Scotiabank Charity Challenge 2021



North Shore Community Resources is putting together a team to run this year's virtual Scotiabank Charity Challenge. We value being able to offer programs and resources at NSCR to support our community in the joys and challenges of journeying life. We are running because we believe in our work and want to contribute to supportive programs like our Caregiver Support program and to be able to continue to expand and build upon what we can do.

Would you like to be a part of our team? We would love to offer you free registration (which includes a t-shirt) and a spot on our team if you are willing to ask family and friends for pledges! Get some exercise and collect pledges with us! Consider yourself personally invited.

The run/ walk is virtual this year and could be done in small bite size pieces alone or physically distanced with a friend. Your commitment would be 5 km over a month-long period. Feel free to connect with me to learn how to say YES to the challenge!

As I run, I carry all of you with me in my heart. Together we are the community of the North Shore and I couldn't be more thankful to be walking this journey of life with its twists and turns alongside amazing people like you.

Sincerely,

Melissa Wade
Caregiver Support Program Coordinator
melissa.wade@nscr.ca
604-982-3320

Learn more about the [Scotiabank Charity Challenge](#) and our team.



Join us May 2021 for Family Caregiver Awareness Month



Family Caregivers
of British Columbia

Access themed resources for caregivers

By signing up for our Enews and following Family Caregivers of BC on Instagram, Facebook, Twitter & LinkedIn

Attend virtual events

Like the Podcast Listening Party May 14th from 10 - 11:15 am PST and a special edition of the provincial support group on May 27th from 2 - 3:30 pm PST —Caregivers Connect: Celebration!

Use #CaregiverAware

To show how you are celebrating caregivers



North Shore
Community
Resources

NSCR Caregiver Support Program

201-935 Marine Drive, N. Vancouver BC V7P 1S3

We publish this bi-monthly newsletter on topics related to self-care and the caregiving role.

If you are interested in accessing a Caregiver Coach or becoming a Caregiver Coach, please contact Elizabeth at elizabeth.bishop@nscr.ca or at 604-982-3320