

July/August 2021

THE GRAPEVINE

North Shore Caregivers Newsletter



CHALLENGING RELATIONSHIPS AND CAREGIVING

Written by Melissa Wade

Becoming someone's caregiver can challenge your relationship with the person you're caring for even if your relationship has always been a positive one. For some people, becoming someone's caregiver creates feelings of increased closeness toward the care recipient, but for others the caregiving experience can bring up challenging emotions and even resentment toward the person they're caring for. The quality of the relationship you had with someone prior to becoming their caregiver can determine how much conflict or emotional difficulty you may encounter while caring for them.

Challenging Relationships and Caregiving cont.

Becoming a caregiver to someone with whom you have a high conflict or poor-quality relationship can be an emotionally complex experience. To cope with this experience, we put together our top five suggestions of things to try that can bring more ease into the relationship you have with the person you're caring for.

1. Seek help from a counsellor or a therapist to work through complicated feelings related to your relationship with the care recipient or stress related to caregiving.
2. Get social support from friends, by joining a caregiver support group or engaging in group oriented recreation and leisure activities at a community centre or club.
3. Read books that offer helpful advice. Examples include: "Taking Care of Parents Who Didn't Take Care of You: Making Peace with Aging Parents," by Eleanor Cade and "Coping With Your Difficult Older Parent: A Guide for Stressed-Out Children," by Grace Lebow
4. Set and maintain boundaries
5. In some instances you may need to hire someone or ask another family member to help care for the person or at the very least, help you care for the person.
6. As hard as it can be, try not to take some things they say or do personally.

Starting September 2021, we will be offering an evidence-based, educational workshop series called Powerful Tools for Caregivers (PTC). The PTC educational series consists of 6 classes held once a week for 6 consecutive weeks.

The class will give you tools to help:

- Reduce Stress
- Improve Self-Confidence
- Manage Time, Set Goals, and Solve Problems
- Better Communicate Their Feelings
- Locate Helpful Resources
- Make Tough Decisions

We will announce the dates of the PTC course, and start registering people in July 2021.

Sources:

[Caring for Parents Who Didn't Care for You: 5 Ways to Handle the Situation](#)

[How to Adjust the Changing Parent and Child Relationship | myTherapyNYC](#)

[How To Be a Caregiver for a Difficult Person](#)

[Home - Powerful Tools For Caregivers](#)

Service Spotlight: The Family Support Institute Of BC (FSI)



The Family Support Institute of BC (FSI) is a provincial not for profit society committed to supporting families who have a family member with a disability. FSI is unique in Canada and the only grass roots family-to-family organization with a broad volunteer base.

FSI's supports and services are free to any family.

FSI honours that they grew out of an era that did not value the pivotal role of families. Therefore, FSI believes:

- Families are the best voice to speak for their unique circumstances
- Informed, involved, and confident families are the most effective agents for creating social change
- Informed families are more empowered to speak for themselves when needed
- Families are the best resource to support one another
- Families have a critical role in shaping the future for their family members

They aim to strengthen, connect and build communities and resources with families of people with disabilities in BC. Through family-to-family support, online resources such as free online workshops, online family hang outs, resource materials and more they are able to connect with families through support and barrier-free resources.

FSI exists to support individuals and families to be connected and fully valued in their communities. You can explore their programs and digital resources to get started and connect with them to talk to someone by visiting www.familysupportbc.com, calling them toll-free at 1-800-441-5403 or emailing fsi@fsibc.com.

JULY EVENTS

MON, JULY 01

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

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

TUE, JULY 06

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

WED, JULY 07

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

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

MON, JULY 19

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

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

WED, JULY 28

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

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

AUGUST EVENTS

TUES, AUGUST 03

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

THURS, AUGUST 05

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

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

WED, AUGUST 16

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

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

WED, AUGUST 18

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

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

MON, AUGUST 16

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

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

Caregiver Spotlight: Michelle Thomsett

What is your current caregiving situation? My father, 98, had a medical emergency that landed him in hospital for a month, which in turn, forced him into long-term care. It's been a long road for both of us that keeps winding in different directions and has certainly kept me on my toes! I know my dad is in a safe place now and receiving round-the-clock care, but my emotions still continue to get the best of me. My dad was used to me spending a lot of time caring for him at home, and if I don't visit my dad all the time at the care home, it makes me feel guilty, the sadness of the whole situation weighs heavy on me, but I also have a huge sense of relief all at the same time, it is overwhelming.

How long have you been a caregiver?

4 ½ years

What brings you joy, helps you recharge or relieve stress? Do you have any hobbies that you enjoy?

Practicing taking pictures with my camera gives me a sense of accomplishment, especially when my results are what I had planned. I find it calming and it takes me right out of that "brain fog". I love being in my own element, it gives me that time out that I need once in a while. Living on the Fraser River has given me inspiration, observing a variety of wildlife in their natural habitat every day. I spotted a new visitor this year, a Bufflehead duck, their breeding habitat is usually wooded lakes and ponds, so it was a real treat to see. I find that planting flowers and herbs is also soothing, it seems to connect with me into connect with me in a way that grounds me, sitting back with my favourite hot cup of tea, watching them thrive,



really uplifts my mood and helps me feel more relaxed, it's my Zen time that I thoroughly enjoy. I've recently been working on a playlist for my dad, compiling his favourite old songs, all the songs were coming back to me from when I was a child, lots of memories, decided to make a playlist for myself, can't stop listening to it!

Why do you think it's important for caregivers to take time for themselves?

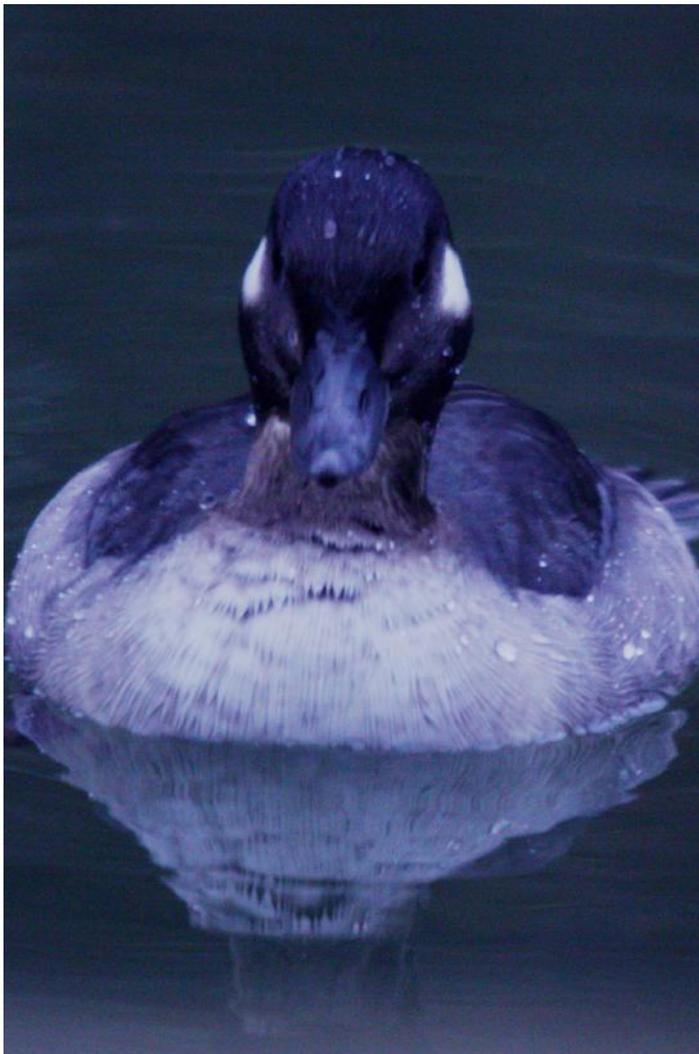
Caring for my dad was a lot more than I expected. My worst enemy was not listening to the voice in my head telling me to slow down and smell the roses. I was struggling to keep up, until one day it just hit me like a ton of bricks. I started thinking that if I can't care for my

Caregiver Spotlight cont.

dad, there is no one else to do it, and my dad depended on me. I signed up for the long haul and wanted to be there for him. It was a wake-up call. So have those Carpe diem moments. Stop and check in with yourself once and a while, and remember that you are doing the very best that you can, keep saying it until you believe it, because you truly are. If you can find a window of time, any time, no matter how long or short, to work on yourself, is better than not doing it at all. One day at a time was my motto, it will all add up in the end and your body and mind will thank you for it.

Anything else you would like to share about yourself?

Last year, during our isolation period, a friend of mine sent me a package of sourdough yeast starter. I thought to myself, who does this? Apparently, it was the craze during Covid. Why didn't I know this? So I said "why not take a kick at it"? Be spontaneous for a change and try something new, right? So I eagerly became part of the sourdough making clan. It took me a few fails and persistence to get the hang of it and then finally, success! Bread therapy "who knew"? The best part was eating it!



The Nuts and Bolts Of the Art of the Life Review: An Introduction

Written By C.A. Bryson

In this article, I will be going over the salient points of the following resources I have found helpful over the years I have spent life writing as an avocation.

I now realize, it depends on whether you're making a 'Life Review' or a life story, that will determine your writing process. However, this article will serve both purposes, though a bit more so, the life story.

1. The Great Courses See online course: 'Writing Your Story' with author Joyce Maynard. (Instant Video \$40 U.S. DVD \$60 U.S.)
2. Capilano University Continuing Studies See the course 'Memoir Writing' with Matt Ferraz (When offered)
3. 'Your Life as Story: Discovering the "New Autobiography" and Writing Memoir as Literature' by Tristine Rainer (NY, Putnam, 1997)
4. (For your enjoyment, and to serve as inspiration: 'Educated' by Tara Westover (HarperCollins, 2018)

Note that in my previous article on the Life Review (April, 2021 Grapevine) that there is increasing evidence that life story work is an effective treatment, in particular for reducing depressive symptoms in older adults. To recap:



The 'Father' of the Life Review is psychologist Robert N. Butler (1961), who postulated the universal occurrence in older persons of an inner experience or mental process he called the Life Review. He proposed that Life Review work helps account for the increased reminiscence in older adults.

For more information see:

'How to Do a Life Review to Find Your Soul's Mission : An Essential Step to Becoming an Elder' by Dr. Connie Zweig

<https://medium.com/@conniezweig/how-to-do-a-life-review-to-find-your-souls-mission-5b27715e1bab>

I. Tristine Rainer: 'Your Life as Story'

Perhaps the most crucial aspect of writing anything such as a life review or an autobiography, is to find your voice. Your 'voice' is defined as your particular way of expressing yourself. Even more importantly, avoid the dreaded 'beige' voice, as in academia or a work report. This is Rainer's suggestion for nurturing your voice:

The Nuts and Bolts of The Art of the Life Review: An Introduction cont.

Keep a diary for yourself alone. This helps you find the courage to 'say what it is you thought you ought not say.' (p.127)

Her advice: use 'I' to refer to yourself past, present and future, rather than 'he' or 'she'. In the narrative, you contain your younger 'past' self, your older present self, and your yet older self far off in the future.

Perhaps the greatest challenge you will face, should you wish to attempt a life story, is that there is so much to say about yourself, and it can be tricky figuring out what to leave in and what to leave out.

To address this challenge, Rainer suggests the following exercise: in your diary, write two lists. The first labelled 'In'; the second labelled 'Out'. Then, writing quickly, fill out the two lists. (Don't worry, you can always go back and make changes later.) Also, I love the metaphor Rainer creates about how writing one's life story is like stringing a pearl necklace: each pearl representing a different 'scene' that moves the story along.

I.The Great Courses. 'Writing Your Story' with author Joyce Maynard.

There are 5 main points I gleaned from her course:

- 1.Perhaps, most importantly: tell one story at a time.
- 2.Tell your story, not your relatives'
- 3.Tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. There is nothing as gripping, so Maynard says, than total honesty.
- 4.Think before you begin. Ask yourself: what am I going to write about? Spend more time thinking about what you are going to say and how you are going to say it.
- 5.Even if no one reads your story, know that you have told the truth. That is what you get back: your story. Your unique fingerprint.

(Personally, the night I finished the last sentence of my most recent life story, I felt an immeasurable sense of peace and calm that I had never felt before and have never felt since.)

II.The 5 Main Takeaways from Matt Ferraz's Course (Capilano University):

1. On the practical side, you can publish your story on a blog.
2. Print-on-Demand is another option (the buyer sells your book for you.)
3. Make the reader 'see' what you are writing about. (The old 'Show don't tell'.) Use all 5 senses to make your writing come alive.
4. Though Maynard's emphasis on truth is certainly compelling, Ferraz advises that some things you might want to keep private. Use common sense.
5. After you write, go away for a while. Then come back, after a day or so, and re-read your writing.

My Own Takeaway:

Perhaps as writer Virginia Woolf said a 'room of one's own' is necessary for good writing. Close the door, minimize interruptions, and be by yourself. True, writing can be a lonely vocation, but the rewards are infinite.

I leave you with the following two quotes:

'Know thyself.' (The Bible)

'In the Book of Life, the answers are not at the back.'
(Charles M. Schultz, creator of the 'Peanuts' cartoon.)

Coping With Change: When You Are Asked to Financially Support A Parent



She invited me over for tea. “We need to catch up,” my Mum told me. It had been awhile since we’d spent time together. She had been coming to our place a few times a month to see the kids. Sometimes she’d stay for dinner and we’d try to get a few words in before the grandchildren would pull her arm and beg for all the attention to be on them. I knew she needed help setting up a new laptop that had been sitting in storage for over a year, and it seemed like a good time to work on it. So, one rainy Sunday afternoon I managed to sneak away for a couple hours to see her.

There was tea and homemade cookies. “They’re falling apart,” she said. “I don’t know quite what happened.” I asked for a fork to finish mine. I wanted to see her - to talk with her. I also wanted to get her computer set up. Before I had children, I did not understand how precious time is. I get fewer things done now, but when I have an opportunity to accomplish anything, I get to work. This was my opportunity to help her with the laptop and I didn’t feel a minute could be wasted. I thought we could talk while we drank tea and I set it up. I made some progress and it was almost time for me to leave. She brought out a piece of paper she’d folded a few times. She sighed. “Darling, I need to ask you... I need to ask you if you can help me with money.” My Mum showed me a roughly written budget that was hard to make out, but the meaning of the note was clear. She did not have enough money coming in to pay all

of her bills, and there didn’t seem to be anywhere she could cut back. I am not proud to say that my first reaction to this request was anger. My cheeks felt hot and I could feel a firm lump in my throat. I felt critical of the way she’d spent money in the past. I was frustrated by the lack of affordable housing options in our community. How can she be asking me for money, I thought? I have young children. I have student debt. “How much do you need,” I asked. “How much can you afford?”

I told her I’d talk to my partner and get back to her. I fumbled with my words, and I left. Anger quickly turned to tears on the elevator ride to the lobby. The frustration was real, but I soon realized the source of my anger was sadness. I felt sad that she had to ask for help. I felt sad I couldn’t help more. I felt sad that the situation made her feel like she needed me to support her when she so badly wanted to be the one to care for me.

When my son is crying, he tells me he needs to “get his sadness out.” I needed to do the same. Once I did, I could think clearly. I looked at our budget and figured out that we could give my mum some money if we cut back on some other things. It wouldn’t be a detrimental amount of money for us to spend, but it would make a big difference to my mum’s quality of life. So, that’s what we did. We worked it in to our budget and we now transfer the same amount to her on the same day every month. The routine helps me normalize the money spent, and I think it helps my

Coping with Change cont.

mum to not have to worry when she might see more money in her account.

Coping with changes in any relationship can be hard. This shift in my relationship with my mum made me feel, for the first time, like a caregiver. It was a terrifying realization. "Getting my sadness out" helped, and, as usual, knowing I was not alone on this journey.

If you are a caregiver and need help coping with changes in a relationship, please register with our Caregiver Support Program and join us at one of our Network Groups.



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 would like to learn more about NSCR's Caregiver Support Program, please contact Melissa Wade: melissa.wade@nscr.ca or 604-982-3320.