

*November/December 2021*

# THE GRAPEVINE

*North Shore Caregivers Newsletter*



## SELF-CARE SPOTLIGHT: CARING FOR YOURSELF DURING THE HOLIDAYS

Written by Melissa Wade

During the holiday season, it can be hard to find time for rest and relaxation. Even though it is called the "holiday" season, it tends to be the busiest time of year for everyone. As caregivers it can be hard to find time to care for yourself but even more essential during the holidays to avoid burnout.

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## Self-Care Spotlight: Caring for Yourself During the Holidays cont.

However, there are some simple ways to recharge during the holidays. According to Harvard Health, you can offset the stress of the holidays by engaging in some of the following self-care practices:

Regularly schedule a time to engage in self-care activities (examples: meditation, a hobby you enjoy etc.) Example: [Five Minute Meditation You Can Do Anywhere](#)

Practice gratitude for the people and events in your life

Resource: [20 Ways to Practice Gratitude](#)

Engage in deep breathing or other relaxation skills (ie. listening to soothing music)

Resource: [3-minute Mindful Breathing](#)

Tune into the emotions you are experiencing (both positive and negative)

Resource: [How to Get in Touch with Your Emotions](#)

Try to understand why you might be experiencing negative emotions

Resource: [Understanding Emotions: 15 Ways to Discover What You're Feeling](#)

Monitor your stress level

Resource: [Is My Stress Level Too High?](#)

Being present around the presents (practice mindfulness)

Resource: [How to Practice Mindfulness](#)

Take care of your physical health (example: try to get enough sleep)

Resource: [6 Tips for Better Sleep](#)

### Sources:

<https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/self-care-strategies-holiday-season-2017121812926>

<https://dailycaring.com/10-stress-relief-tips-to-get-you-through-the-holidays-self-care-for-caregivers>

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# This Too Shall Pass: On Older Adults and Addiction



In 2012, amid a growing deprescribing movement in the medical community, I lost my benzodiazepine prescription. (Benzodiazepine is a medication prescribed for anxiety.) This was very difficult for me. But given the risk of falls from benzodiazepine use in older adults, this was a good thing. Here are some statistics on addiction just so you can become familiar with the lay of the land:

## I. Prevalence:

- In 2016, nearly 2/3 of seniors were prescribed 5 or more different drug classes. Of these, a small percentage were prescribed benzodiazepines. However, the rate of benzo use among seniors has been in decline since 2016 (to which the anecdote above attests.)
- In Canada, middle-aged or older cannabis use was more likely to have started since legalization. However, only 7% of older Canadians use cannabis as opposed to 25% of those aged 15-44.
- The percentage of older adults who abuse alcohol (see recommendations for safe consumption, below), was 1-22%

<https://globalnews.ca/news/6101805/seniors-cannabis-use-growth-statistics-canada>

## I. Alcohol:

Alcohol Use Disorder Among Older Adults: <https://ccsmh.ca/substance-use-addiction/alcohol-guidelines/>

Alcohol is the most commonly used and misused substance among older adults. Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD) and risky alcohol consumption is common among older adults, with reported problem drinking rates ranging from 1-22% (2009, CCSMH: Canadian Coalition for Seniors Mental Health)

Here are some safe guidelines for alcohol consumption:

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## **On Older Adults and Addiction cont.**

- For men: 1-2 drinks per day (no more than 7 drinks per week)
- For women: 1 standard alcoholic drink per day (no more than 5 alcoholic drinks per week in total)
- Non-drinking days are recommended every week.

### **A. Treatment:**

Those with substance use issues should seek evidence-based treatments offered either in the community or elsewhere.

Here's a good place to start: [Get help with substance use:](#)

You can also try calling:

Alcohol & Drug Information and Referral Service  
Available 24 hrs across British Columbia  
1-800-663-1441  
Lower Mainland: 604-660-9382

For family members, the important thing is to try not to judge the person with an addiction. Starting a conversation about someone's addiction can be challenging. [Here is one approach you can try.](#)

Late onset users are often in post-retirement, and can suffer from chronic pain, and perhaps lack resources for treatment. People often say things like:

"Who can blame him?"

"It's the only pleasure he has left."

And so on. There's a distinct risk of falls with addiction (see above regarding the use of benzodiazepines). Often the best solution is one of harm reduction, rather than abstinence. On the other hand, research shows that older people stay abstinent longer than young people do.

(The above information on older people and addictions came from a SMART Recovery podcast online. (2021) More on SMART Recovery below.)

### **B. Tools for Sobriety: VACI (Vital Absorbing Creative Interest)**

Evidence-based treatments are scientifically proven treatments for addiction. One place I and many others have received help is SMART Recovery. SMART stands for: Self-Management and Recovery Training, and it is based on an empowerment model of addiction recovery; that is, given the right tools, you can be empowered to manage your own recovery. Like AA (Alcoholics Anonymous), SMART is abstinence-based, rather than moderation based. But unlike AA, SMART

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## **On Older Adults and Addiction cont.**

does not have a spirituality-based program.

You can find out more about SMART recovery [here](#).

Please see the following about SMART recovery groups offered through [CMHA \(Canadian Mental Health Association \(CMHA\) North and West Vancouver Branch](#)

C.Crochet, Olé!... & NSCR's Virtual Knitting Circle coming in November!

The tool that helped me the most was the idea of the VACI (Vital Absorbing Creative Interest). Purely by accident, I discovered that an absorbing hobby like crochet (as well as paint-by-numbers), can help me to better manage cravings. Furthermore, I found crochet to be a soothing and calming activity, particularly in the evenings. I suppose the same could be said for a hobby like knitting. Fortunately, NSCR volunteer Melissa Wade is offering a Virtual Knitting Circle in November of this year. All materials will be supplied free of charge. What better way to spend an evening, than knitting (or crocheting) together while chatting about everything under the sun?

For more information please contact: Caregiver Support Program Coordinator Vic Gailiunas:  
Vic.Gailiunas@nscr.ca

If you are interested in crochet, I recommend YouTube videos by Bella Coco, B-Hooked, and Yarnspirations, in particular. Recently, I finished a crochet blanket for Thanksgiving, and it is like a warm hug.

There is also the North Shore Knitters and Crocheters group on [nextdoor.ca](#), a local social networking service. (Note: There is a fee involved for the [nextdoor.ca](#) group, but not for the NSCR Knitting Circle.)

Remember, always: One day at a time, and Easy does it.

Best wishes to your excellent health.

C.A. Bryson (CAB) 2021

# November Events

**November 2nd**  
Caregiver Support  
Group Meeting  
(In-person & Zoom)  
6:30-8:30pm

**November 4th**  
Men's Group Meeting  
(In-person)  
1-3pm

**November 15th**  
Persian Group  
Meeting  
(Zoom)  
4-6pm

**November 10, 17,  
24**  
Knitting Circle  
(Zoom)  
5:30-7PM

# December Events

**December 2nd**  
Men's Group  
Meeting  
(In-person)  
1-3pm

**December 7th**  
Caregiver Support  
Group Meeting  
(In-person & Zoom)  
6:30-8:30pm

**December 20th**  
Persian Group  
Meeting  
(Zoom)  
4-6pm

**December 14**  
Bereavement  
Group  
(Zoom)  
6:30-8PM

**December 1, 8, 15**  
Knitting Circle  
(Zoom)  
5:30-7PM

Contact Vic to register:  
604-982-3320 or vic.gailunas@nscr.ca

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## Welcoming NSCR's New Caregiver Support Coordinator: Vic Gailiunas

My name is Vic Gailiunas, and I am happy to be taking over for Melissa Wade as the new Caregiver Support Program Coordinator for North Shore Community Resources (NSCR). I have lived in North Vancouver for 25 years and am a proud husband and dad to two wonderful sons. I enjoy tennis and badminton, watching hockey (I'm in a fun, highly competitive hockey pool), and soccer (my kids were both high-level players) and curling up with my wife to watch a good Netflix show. I am also a singer/songwriter/musician and have released albums, videos, and toured throughout Canada, the U.S & Europe.

I previously worked in copyright law licensing doing business development and industry relations for a quite a few years.

Before that, I received my Bachelor of Arts from the University of Alberta in English and Sociology. As a 'second career', I became interested in social work during a personally life-altering experience that took me from BC to Alberta, where I started my Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) at the University of Calgary, and back to BC again.

My second practicum to finish my degree was with NSCR, who do wonderful work. I had volunteered with them in the past, picking up and delivering groceries during the pandemic; and collecting tax forms to pass along to accountants who do taxes for seniors, free of charge. In my practicum, I was involved directly with a men's group for spousal caregivers, and other caregiving groups via Zoom following Melissa's wonderful lead. I also worked with Kathy in the Senior's



OneStop program helping research, organize, and explain resources to people. My activities were overseen by Sue at NSCR, Leya from Hollyburn Family Services Society as my field instructor/registered social worker, and a faculty advisor from U of C. I just completed this practicum and will receive my degree in November. What a journey!

In the social work field, I'd always been interested in the areas of group and family work, and mental health, so the Caregiver Support program fits perfectly. Though I expect to be learning a fair bit myself as I begin this new position, I hope the skills I've learned doing my degree and my own lived experience will be helpful to the North Shore caregiver community as we move forward together.



# MEN'S CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUP

North Shore Community Resources (NSCR) offers a support group specifically for male caregivers who support their spouses or partners – either living together or apart.

The group was designed to create community and offer a time of sharing, listening, and connecting for men with the unique experience of caregiving for their partners.

Program participants are welcome to encourage other men they feel might benefit from joining the group.

## MONTHLY MEETINGS

IN THE COVID-19 CONTEXT, PROTOCOLS ARE IN PLACE (PROOF OF DOUBLE VACCINATION, MASKS) FOR MEETINGS TO NOW TAKE PLACE IN PERSON AT THE NSCR COMMUNITY ROOM ONE DAY A MONTH.

NEXT TWO MEETINGS:

THURSDAY NOV. 4 1-3PM

THURSDAY DEC. 2 1-3PM



For more information and details, contact:  
Vic Gailiunas [Vic.Gailiunas@nscr.ca](mailto:Vic.Gailiunas@nscr.ca)  
or Pat Dean (Group Leader) [pdean@telus.net](mailto:pdean@telus.net)

**COME KNIT WITH US!**

# **CAREGIVER'S VIRTUAL KNITTING CIRCLE**

**\*ALL LEVELS OF EXPERIENCE WELCOME**

**\*A BASIC KNITTING KIT WILL BE PROVIDED**

**\*YOU ARE WELCOME TO BRING THE PERSON YOU ARE CARING FOR**



**EVERY WEDNESDAY STARTING NOVEMBER 10TH  
UNTIL DECEMBER 15TH  
FROM 5:30 PM TO 7 PM ON ZOOM  
FACILITATED BY MELISSA WADE**



## Holiday Grief Support Group for Caregivers

**Tuesday, December 14th 2021**

**6:30PM | Zoom | FREE**

North Shore Community Resources (NSCR) is offering a bereavement support group specifically for caregivers coping with grief during the holiday season and winter months. The group is designed to create community and offer a time of sharing, listening, and connecting with others.



Contact Vic Gailiunas to register and receive the Zoom link:  
[vic.gailiunas@nscr.ca](mailto:vic.gailiunas@nscr.ca)  
604-982-3320



### 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 Vic Gailiunas at [vic.gailiunas@nscr.ca](mailto:vic.gailiunas@nscr.ca) or 604-982-3320.