

January/February 2022

THE GRAPEVINE

North Shore Caregivers Newsletter



VIRTUES REFLECTIONS: EMPATHY

Written by VG

A counsellor I know told me about an app for my phone that I have found extremely helpful in reminding me about many of the virtues we, as human beings, can be grateful for. In fact, it's called 'Virtues Reflections Cards'... and what better to muse on as we start a new year filled with hope but our virtues?

It's set up as a deck of cards where each card refers to an individual virtue. One side of the 'card' offers a paragraph on the specific virtue (ie: kindness); then you click the circular arrows at the

Virtues Reflections: Empathy cont.

bottom & it flips the 'card' and gives you a quote about that virtue, as well as a few lines on practicing it. Lastly, it reminds you about why you can be thankful for this virtue. It only takes a minute or two to read and reflect on each one and I have found that even one a day can be restorative when I need a reminder.

Over the next while, I will share some of these and my hope is you'll take that minute or two to read them and take them to heart as well. I believe, for caregivers and/or people supporting friends or loved ones through illness, traumatic experiences, or simply the aging process, these are like a brief meditation on positivity and they shine a light on the beauty of the human condition.

Today's Virtue: Empathy:

"Empathy is the ability to put ourselves in another's place and to understand their experience. We are deeply present to their thoughts and feelings with such compassionate accuracy that they can hear their own thoughts more clearly. Empathy connects us with our common humanity. It protects us from prejudice, blame and judgment – those things that divide us from each other. With empathy, we reflect on how our actions affect others. It moves us to seek justice for every person, even those with whom we disagree. Empathy inspires us to be giving and selfless. Empathy connects our hearts"

On the back of the 'Empathy card', there's a quote:

"To listen another's soul into a condition of disclosure and discovery may be almost the greatest service any human being ever performs for another." – Douglas V. Steere

The Practice of Empathy:

I seek to understand others' experience.

I listen with compassion.

I refrain from judging and blaming.

I think about how my choices impact others.

I care about people's rights.

I feel my connection to all people.

...and lastly: I am thankful for the gift of Empathy. It sensitizes my heart.

Take care of yourselves & Happy New Year!

Vic G.

Powerful Tools for Caregivers



Coming in January 2022!
Thursdays 3-4:30PM
January 20th-February 24th, 2022

Powerful Tools for Caregivers classes help caregivers take better care of themselves while caring for a friend or relative. Whether you provide care for a spouse, partner, parent, friend, or a child with special needs; at home or in a care facility; whether down the block or miles away, yours is an important role. This course is for family caregivers like you!

The classes give you tools to help:

- Reduce stress
- Improve self-confidence
- Manage time, set goals, and solve problems
- Better communicate your feelings
- Make tough decisions
- Locate helpful resources

This six-week class series gives you the confidence and support to better care for your loved one – and yourself. In the class, caregivers receive The Caregiver Helpbook, which follows the curriculum and provides additional tools to address specific caregiver issues.

“After taking this class I am a more confident caregiver! Having tools to resolve problems is a definite advantage in becoming a better caregiver and a happier, wiser, healthier me...and a healthier ‘us!’” - PTC Class Participant

Please contact Vic.Gailiunas@nscr.ca or phone 604-982-3320 to register.

Powerful Tools for Caregivers (PTC) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. The PTC national office in Portland, OR supports caregivers, Class Leaders, and Master Trainers in the US, Canada, and Korea.
<https://www.powerfultoolsforcaregivers.org/>

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 JAN. 6 12-2PM

THURSDAY FEB. 3 12-2PM



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

Incapacity Planning: The Importance of Powers of Attorney and Healthcare Representation Agreements

January 4, 2022

6:30PM | Zoom | FREE

Senior Living Advisor, Stephanie Chan, will join our Caregiver Support Group Meeting to discuss Incapacity Planning and answer any questions you may have.



CONNECT

EMPOWER

PARTICIPATE



For more information or to find out more about NSCR's caregiver support programs, please contact:

Vic Gailiunas (Caregiver Support Program Coordinator)

Vic.Gailiunas@nscr.ca or 604-982-3320

January Events

January 4th
Caregiver Support
Group Meeting
Guest Speaker
(Zoom) 6:30-8:30PM

January 6th
Men's Group Meeting
(In-person)
12-2PM

Jan. 12, 19 & 26
Knitting Group
(Zoom)
5:30-7PM

January 17th
Persian Group
Meeting
(Zoom)
6-8PM

January 20 & 27
Powerful Tools for
Caregivers
Workshop
(Zoom) 3-4PM

February Events

February 1st
Caregiver Support
Group Meeting
(In-person & Zoom)
6:30-8:30PM

Feb. 2, 9 & 16
Knitting Group
(Zoom)
5:30-7PM

February 3rd
Men's Group Meeting
(In-person)
12-2PM

February 21st
Persian Group
Meeting
(Zoom)
6-8PM

**February 3, 10, 17
& 24**
Powerful Tools for
Caregivers
(Zoom) 3-4PM

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

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



CONTINUING WEDNESDAYS, JANUARY 12TH UNTIL
FEBRUARY 16TH

FROM 5:30 PM TO 7 PM ON ZOOM
FACILITATED BY MELISSA WADE

TO REGISTER, EMAIL: CAREGIVER SUPPORT PROGRAM
COORDINATOR VIC.GAILIUNAS@NSCR.CA

Compassion for Caregivers: A Literary Road Trip

Written By C.A. Bryson



In this article I will guide you through the literature on compassion that came off the presses in the last 20 years or so.

We begin with Paul Gilbert (pre-Trump, pre-COVID-19) and his 2009 book: 'The Compassionate Mind: A New Approach to Life's Challenges' published by Robinson. This hefty book presents a cosmological look at compassion from the point of view not just of the individual, but society and the world as a whole.

According to Gilbert, compassion is not only a form of therapy but also a way to see, interpret, and act, in the world. The world, not just our tiny, atomized existences. Ultimately, Gilbert's book offers a clear message of hope for humanity.

Next, we skip to 2011 and Kristen Neff's book: 'Self-Compassion: The Proven Power of Being Kind to Yourself', published by HarperCollins (again, pre-Trump, pre-COVID-19). Neff is an expert on self-compassion, and has been for many years, in fact, she's now got a new book out. But in her 2011 book, her message is crystal clear: treat yourself as you would a very dear friend. See Neff's website at:

<https://www.self-compassion.org>

Her 2021 book, also published by HarperCollins, is entitled: 'Fierce Self-Compassion: How Women Can Harness Kindness to Speak Up, Claim Their Power, and Thrive.' Here is an excerpt from her new book, hot off the presses:

'People who are more self-compassionate are better able to see the positives they gained from past crises, including a sense of closeness with others, greater appreciation for the value of their own life, and confidence in their personal abilities. Better than decimating us, self-compassion transforms setbacks into opportunities for learning.'

(I'll interject here, sounds like she's describing a growth mindset.)

She goes on to write:

'By tapping into the power of brave, empowered clarity, we're able to take charge of our lives and tackle

challenges with more courage and determination. When we come through situations that seem impossible to bear at the time—and do so not with cold stoicism but with warmth and compassion—we discover strengths we never knew we had.’

To whet your appetite, I include (almost) verbatim the ‘Compassion with Equanimity’ practice found on page 267 of her book ‘Fierce Self-Compassion.’

You can also find a guided audio version of this practice on the book’s website at:

<https://FierceSelf-Compassion.org>

Neff advises caregivers to do the practice once or twice on their own before applying it to an actual caregiving situation.

This exercise encapsulates the importance of self-care for caregivers in a nutshell: ‘caring for ourselves is actually the energy source powering our ability to help others’ (p.271, Fierce Self-Compassion)

Instructions:

- Please find a comfortable position and take a few deep breaths to settle into your body and into the present moment. You might put your hand over your heart, or wherever feels comforting and supportive, as a reminder to infuse your awareness with warmth.
- Bring to mind someone you are caring for who is exhausting you or frustrating you or worrying you—someone who is suffering. Visualize the person and the caregiving situation clearly in your mind and feel the tension in your body.
- *Now say these words silently to yourself: ‘Everyone is on their own life journey. I am not the cause of this person’s suffering, nor is it within my power to make it go away. Moments like these can be difficult to bear, yet I may still try to help if I can.’*
- Aware of the stress in your body, inhale freely and deeply, drawing compassion inside you, filling your body with a loving, connected presence. You can also imagine that your body is being filled with a golden light. Let yourself be soothed by inhaling deeply, and by giving yourself the compassion you need.
- As you exhale, send compassion out to the person you are caring for. You can also imagine that their body is filled with a golden light.
- Continue breathing compassion in and out, allowing your body to find a natural breathing rhythm.
- If you find that you need to focus more on yourself, focus more on breathing in. If you are more drawn to the person you are caring for, you can focus more on breathing out. Make sure to always include yourself and the other.
- Notice how your body is being soothed and caressed from the inside. You might imagine that you are floating effortlessly on a sea of compassion. Continue breathing compassion in and out for as long as you like.
- When you’re ready, silently repeat these words once again:

'Everyone is on their own life journey. I am not the cause of this person's suffering, nor is it in my power to make it go away (though I may wish I could). Moments like these can be difficult to bear, yet I may still try to help if I can.'

- Now let go of the practice and allow yourself to be exactly as you are in this moment.

I have found the wisdom gleaned from these two writers to be enormously helpful in my caregiving journey, and I hope you will too. Though these writers may have different philosophies, their message is the same:

Care for yourself as you would a dear friend, for your life and the future of this planet may very well depend on it.

Peace to you all in this year and the next.

CAB 2021

Meet Anna: Caregiver Peer Support Coach

My name is Anna and presently I volunteer with the North Shore Community Resources (NSCR) as a caregiver coach and work as an invigilator for an English language testing service.

In 2013 my husband was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer and I was suddenly thrust into the role of a caregiver. I had no idea what to do let alone care for someone who had to go through chemotherapy every week, deal with its side-effects, have medical conversations with oncologists and nurses on top of keeping a full-time job.

I was not aware of the toll caregiving was taking on me because my focus was caring for my husband, until I was informed there was a caregiving support group offered by NSCR. The first thing I learned when I joined the support group was to take care of myself.

Being part of the NSCR caregiver support group gave me a new perspective on how to care for myself to be a kind and more compassionate caregiver. The support group gave me a safe, hopeful, and comforting place to share my fears and on-going experiences. It was remarkable to listen to other caregivers share their stories and learn how they met the challenges caregiving presented.

Together with the group, my faith/belief played a part in my caregiving journey. It gave me the grace to accept the things I could not control and take action on things I could. Caregiving was a very demanding experience yet it gave me the gift of empathetic understanding that every single one of us was taking on a difficult



journey.

After my husband died in 2016, I thought about the other caregivers who were struggling and trying to put their lives together while caring for a love one. I shared my thoughts with the caregiver support group coordinator at the time and said I would be open to volunteer as a companion to another caregiver if only to listen, or chat and make her understand she was not alone.

A month after my husband died, I lost my mother and nine months after, my father joined my mother. The death of three people closest to me gave me a wake-up call on my own mortality. The losses taught me to live each day to the fullest, to be grateful and try to be a better person than I was the previous day. But above all these, I learned to appreciate life's big and small miracles. To keep a healthy and active body and mind, I've opted to pick and choose my battles to ease-off life's stresses. I continue to learn something new and choose to do things that take me out of my comfort level so I get over the fear and build self-reliance. I do activities that give me quiet time, pick up a new hobby, and do volunteer work.

Caregiving can be a long and lonely road but there are fellow travelers along the way who can take the journey with you through shared stories and experiences. It makes the trip less overwhelming.

This holiday season, give yourself the gift of self-love.

By Ayda Fathi

As we are getting closer to Christmas, you might be feeling overwhelmed and pressured playing the holiday game. During the holiday season, we may become lost in obligations and meeting our loved ones expectations that we end up forgetting to taking care of ourselves. We might feel guilty and think we are disappointing our loved ones if we spend some personal time doing what we want even if it's simply doing nothing, enjoying the quiet and the solitude. I am here to dare you fight that guilt, if you want to be able to support your loved ones, you need to fuel up on self-love, and you need to take care of yourself.

Just thinking about self-care can be a task itself, so I wanted to share some suggestions for practicing self-compassion and gratitude that you might find helpful:

- Keep a gratitude journal, you can start by writing five things you are grateful for everyday or as often as you want!
- It's okay to say no to anything that drains you or feels stressful.
- If you feel like you have too much on your plate and are feeling overwhelmed, ask for support.
- Ditch the perfectionist mentality, we all want to make people around us happy, and create a meaningful and memorable holidays for our loved ones but "perfection" doesn't exist, so let it go and you end up enjoying your time a lot more.

Wishing you a jolly Christmas and happy holidays,

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 would like to learn more about NSCR's Caregiver Support Program, please contact Vic Gailiunas: vic.gailiunas@nscr.ca or 604-982-3320.