

March/April 2022

THE GRAPEVINE

North Shore Caregivers Newsletter



VIRTUES REFLECTIONS: FORGIVENESS

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 and reflect on 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: Forgiveness 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. 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. I shared this one with our Caregiver Group at the last meeting and wanted to share it here again.

Today's Virtue: Forgiveness:

"Forgiveness is overlooking mistakes and letting go of resentments. Forgiveness frees us from the needless pain of reliving hurt over and over. Forgiveness doesn't make a wrong choice right; it brings the generosity of spirit to release it. Forgiveness can heal even the most grievous offense. It brings a blessed opportunity for a clean start. Accepting Divine forgiveness transforms or hopeless guilt into resolve. Self-forgiveness moves us forward, ready to do things differently, with compassion for ourselves and faith that we can change. Forgiveness opens the door of hope"

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

"Resolve to be tender with the young, compassionate with the aged, sympathetic with the striving, and tolerant with the weak and wrong. Sometime in your life, you will have been all of these"
– Robert V. Goddard

The Practice of Forgiveness:

I overlook mistakes.
I free myself from pain and resentment.
I am willing to heal the past.
I find it in my heart to give others another chance.
I use guilt only as a signal for change.
I accept Divine redemption.
I have the power to change for the better

... and lastly: I am thankful for the gift of Forgiveness. It lightens my spirit.

Take care of yourselves!



CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUP

North Shore Community Resources (NSCR) offers a monthly support group specifically for family caregivers who support their loved ones – either living together or apart.

The group's goal is to create community and offer a time of sharing, listening, and connecting for anyone with the unique experience of caregiving for family members.

Program participants are welcome to encourage and invite others they feel might benefit from joining the group.

MONTHLY MEETINGS

MEETINGS ARE CURRENTLY ON THE FIRST
TUESDAY EVENING OF EACH MONTH
FROM 6:30 – 8:30PM.

FOR THE NEAR FUTURE, NSCR WILL BE
MEETING ON ZOOM. WE HOPE TO BE
BACK IN-PERSON SOON. FOR THE ZOOM
LINK, PLEASE CONTACT NSCR DIRECTLY.



For more information and details,
contact Vic: Vic.Gailiunas@nscr.ca

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.

FOR NOW, WE WILL BE BACK MEETING IN PERSON. IN THE COVID-19 CONTEXT, PROTOCOLS ARE IN PLACE (PROOF OF FULL VACCINATION, MASKS) FOR ALL IN-PERSON MEETINGS AT THE NSCR COMMUNITY ROOM. OUR MEETINGS RUN THE FIRST THURSDAY OF EACH MONTH, FROM 12-2:00PM



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

CAREGIVER BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT GROUP

Wednesday, March 15, 2022
from 6:30PM to 8:00PM

North Shore Community Resources (NSCR) is offering a support group specifically for caregivers experiencing grief/bereavement in the loss of their loved one. The group is designed to create community and offer a time of sharing, listening, and connecting with others with similar experience.



CONNECT

EMPOWER

PARTICIPATE



Please RSVP Vic Gailiunas to register and receive the Zoom link:
vic.gailiunas@nscr.ca
604-982-3320

Visit nscr.ca to learn more about NSCR's Caregiver Support Program.

March Events

March 1st

Caregiver Support
Group Meeting
(Zoom)
6:30-8:30PM

March 3rd

Men's Support
Group Meeting
(In-Person)
12-2PM

March 15th

Bereavement Support
Group Meeting
(Zoom)
6:30-8PM

March 21st

Persian Group
Meeting
(Zoom)
6:30-8:30PM

April Events

April 5th

Caregiver Support
Group Meeting
(Zoom)
6:30-8:30PM

April 7th

Men's Support
Group Meeting
(In-Person)
12-2PM

April 18th

Persian Group
Meeting
(Zoom)
6:30-8:30PM

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

Meet Robyn: Caregiver

What has been your journey into caregiving?

My mom was diagnosed with ALS when I was one year old. She lived a remarkable 42 years with the disease. I grew up being a natural caregiver over the years. My mom was a gift to everyone one she met. She was my mentor and best friend. She surrendered to life, accepting that exactly what is happening in the moment is precisely perfect even if it may not be as we wish.

What made you want to be a peer support person for other caregivers?

The peer support caregiving volunteer position seemed like it would be a natural fit. Understandably, a lot of love, compassion and time is focused on the ones receiving the caregiving which is wonderful, though the caregivers need to know they are held in support, love and caring too. It's important for them to know others are holding space for them.

What do you believe are some benefits to attending a caregiving group or accessing peer support?

The feedback that I have received with tremendous gratitude and appreciation is that the caregivers deeply need someone outside of their family and close friends to be that sounding board, that listener who gets it, someone who has been in similar shoes and understands with compassion.

How does it make you feel when you support one of your peer caregivers?

The experience is transformative, it cultivates tenderness and loving kindness.



It fulfills so many heart-centered emotions. I believe everything is a teaching moment. I learn and grow so much from these equal giving and receiving relationships.

How do you take care of yourself? What are some things you do to bring yourself joy?

I choose to live every day with love, compassion, joy and gratitude in my heart. I find time daily for consciousness, loving, awareness practice. I meditate and walk in nature every day. No matter what circumstances may come my way, I don't judge it neither good nor bad. Life is a process, allowing it to be for in this moment, exactly as it is. It will change. You never know where any situation may lead. Truly surrender to the moment, be at peace with all it brings. That brings me joy.

'When Words Fail: How a Creative Caregiver Opened A Door to Healing'



Written By C.A. Bryson

'A great flame follows a little spark.' Dante Alighieri

I started journaling when I was 9 years old, which led to writing poetry and short stories as a teenager. That carried on for much of my adult life. Recently I began exploring crafts. I was tutoring a student with a disability and used crafts as a therapeutic mode of teaching. It then spread out into my life to this present day. I often wondered why crafts, why a form of non-verbal expression and not writing? Perhaps it is the impact of difficult caregiving experiences that led me to explore this path; and others also, as we shall see, turn to art and music as forms of creative expression, and as pathways to healing.

In the 2017 journal article: 'Everyday Creative Activity as a Path to Flourishing' (Connor De Young and Paul J. Silvia) they write: "...one need not have a particularly creative personality (being high in openness or having an artistic skill), to benefit from finding a creative activity in which one might be interested in carrying out occasionally." (p. 15) Indeed, you don't have to be a big 'A' artist- a small 'a' artist will do. Often with the big 'A' artists, like Vincent Van Gogh for example (I saw the exhibit 'Imagine Van Gogh' last summer), the theme of the brilliant yet tormented artist is a familiar pattern.

Yet, "every day creativity can be a means of cultivating positive psychological functioning." (De Young p.3)

Particularly for caregivers (especially for caregivers), during challenging times. When COVID-19 hit, I found myself crafting house hippos (see image above), after watching the iconic house hippo commercial on TV.

<https://www.narcity.com/life/canadians-across-the-country-still-want-to-own-a-house-hippo>

Crafting, I found, boosted my mood and helped me reach out to others when I gifted them with my hand-crafted house hippos. Crafting then, along with writing, became an essential part of my self-care as a caregiver. In addition, a way to reach out to others.

Apparently: "flourishing, or what psychologists have described as "eudaimonic well-being"—is a state of optimal functioning accompanied by "feelings of meaning, engagement, and purpose in life." My hobbies do give shape and meaning to what could be formless days of sameness (a la "Groundhog Day") and provide me with a vital and life-affirming sense of purpose.

True, a job can give people a sense of purpose, but sometimes also, jobs can be a source of stress, even

When Words Fail cont.

trauma, as firefighters experienced in the article 'Lifelines' by Alayna Fairman. (PRM, 2020). To heal from the traumatic situations Alberta firefighter Daniel Sundahl experienced in his job, he turned to dramatic images of digital art. Writes Julia Hyslop, clinical counsellor: "art offers, really beautifully, a non-verbal language with which to communicate and process trauma when words fail."

Both art and music can soothe, as poet William Congreve put it: "music has Charms to soothe the savage breast". That quote from days of old speaks volumes to the experience of how non-verbal creativity can calm and soothe people when they are feeling distressed (but put much more eloquently by the poet). I have a karaoke app on my phone (Smule), that I find calming and engaging. However, words still comfort, as daily I write musings and ideas in my little notebooks. Indeed, journaling can affirm to me that I am here, that I matter, and that I have something of value to say.

Such a busy, busy world isn't it? And how very gratifying it is to know, for example, that you can crochet a baby blanket with your hands, follow an intricate pattern, and at the same time, express something both beautiful and practical? One might call crochet small 'c' creativity, and admittedly my mother cooked much in the same manner, and my sister enjoys gardening. All these activities engage the heart and mind and are fascinating ways to while away the hours. I think it fitting then, to end with the words of Vincent Van Gogh who said: "the way to know life is to know many things."

And so, soon to be entering the close of my fifth decade, Catherine's 'quirky crafts' and volunteer blogging live on, and so they will, for as long as the spirit moves me.

Sources:

'Every day Creative Activity as a Path to Flourishing' Connor De Young and Paul J. Silvia. Journal of Positive Psychology (2017).

In the Footsteps of Vincent Van Gogh Wondrium course Prof. Jean-Pierre Isbouts (2021)
<https://www.wondrium.com/>

'Memories on Canvas, Lifelines' by Alayna Fairman. PRM Vol.3 Issue 7 2020.

<https://psychcentral.com/lib/the-health-benefits-of-journaling/721>



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 Gailunas: vic.gailunas@nscr.ca or 604-982-3320.