

January/February 2023

THE GRAPEVINE

North Shore Caregivers Newsletter



'TIS THE SEASON ...TO CULTIVATE HOPEFULNESS: FINDING HOPE IN THE NEW YEAR

Written by C.A. Bryson

Although I am writing this article in 2022, by the time you read this, the new year will have begun. Therefore, to you all, a very Happy New Year. But first things first—it's still the holidays until January 6th (Epiphany), and really it can take the better part of January to recover from all the excitement of the season, so plan something nice for yourself to welcome in 2023 on the right footing.

'Tis the season (continued)

For example, you could treat yourself to some nice appetizers. After all, as Napoleon once said: "An army marches on its stomach." Check out the Loblaws website linked in the resources section (no, I don't work for Loblaws, I just think they offer good variety at reasonable prices).

Also, check out the sales. You might find a bargain. But, as always, consume mindfully. Writes Gayle MacDonald, in her recent article: 'Shopping with Heart' (The Globe and Mail, Saturday November 26, 2022): Conscious consumerism is: "Engaging in the economy with more awareness of how your consumption affects society at large." Personally, I've decided not to buy into the holiday shopping frenzy and prefer instead to have 'a little something' to look forward to in the new year.

I recommend that you watch the 3-minute video (on YouTube) entitled: 'How to Cope with Grief Over the Holidays' (or indeed, any time of year), by David Kessler, grief expert. (Washington Post, December 21, 2021). I learned that:

- It's okay to be sad (include your loss in your holidays)
- Try lighting a candle in memory of your loved one
- Ask for what you need (don't assume other people know)



I also visited a web page by Shelly Pinomaki entitled: 'Finding Hope During Holiday Season Stress' (November 24, 2019), also linked in the resources section.

I learned the importance of:

- Reaching out or volunteering during the holidays
- Taking care of yourself (getting enough sleep, staying hydrated, continuing to exercise)
- Being realistic
- Setting aside differences
- Setting aside some alone time and downtime
- Planning ahead

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'Tis the season (continued)

Further, I also visited the website: 'Why We Often Feel Lonely During the Holidays - and How to Cope' (October 2, 2022) by Elizabeth Yuko, linked in the resources section.

Among other things, you will learn that the following coping strategies are important:

- Being kind to yourself
- Making a point to spend time with the people who mean the most to you (this might not necessarily mean your biological family, but rather, neighbours and friends)
- Planning something to look forward to (for me personally, I'd like to explore learning more about pottery)

Also, be aware of isolated seniors in your neighbourhood. 'Keep your eyes open and take action if necessary' advises Heather Palmer of Amica Senior Lifestyles.

And lastly, to leave you with something to look forward to in 2023, indeed, something that might tickle your funny bone - here are a few movies coming up in the new year:

- The Super Mario Bros Movie (2023) Opening: April 7, 2023
- The Little Mermaid (2023) Opening: May 26, 2023

Explore other movies to look forward to on the Rotten Tomatoes website (linked in the resources section).

Peace to you all and I wish you health and happiness in 2023! Next year, I would like to offer a Grapevine article on The Highly Sensitive Caregiver.

A note on the image at right: I have a holly tree in my backyard—I drew this holly leaf one afternoon at teatime. The lettering is copied from ChalkfulofLove: 'Hand Lettering 101' (2017, Blue Star Press).

I leave you with the following quote, by Stanley Kubrick. I think it is apt for these challenging times.

'However vast the darkness, we must supply our own light.'



RESOURCES

PRESIDENT'S CHOICE WEBSITE:
[HTTPS://WWW.PRESIDENTSCHOICE.CA/INSIDERSREPORT](https://www.presidentschoice.ca/insidersreport)

'FINDING HOPE DURING HOLIDAY SEASON STRESS' BY SHELLY PINOMAKI:
[HTTPS://SEEKINGHOPE.COM/BLOG/FINDING-HOPE-DURING-HOLIDAY-SEASON-STRESS](https://seekinghope.com/blog/finding-hope-during-holiday-season-stress)

'WHY WE OFTEN FEEL LONELY DURING THE HOLIDAYS - AND HOW TO COPE' BY ELIZABETH YUKO:
[HTTPS://WWW.REALSIMPLE.COM/HEALTH/MIND-MOOD/HOLIDAY-LONELINESS-CAUSES-COPING](https://www.realsimple.com/health/mind-mood/holiday-loneliness-causes-coping)

MOST ANTICIPATED MOVIES OF 2023:
[HTTPS://EDITORIAL.ROTTENTOMATOES.COM/ARTICLE/MOST-ANTICIPATED-MOVIES-OF-2023/](https://editorial.rottentomatoes.com/article/most-anticipated-movies-of-2023/)

Did you know about our other Seniors programs?



Seniors One Stop

As we move through life, we face different challenges. NSCR's Seniors One Stop Program is here to support seniors, their families, friends, and service providers with information and resources that are offered in our community. For confidential information about housing, health care, finances and more, we are ready to assist you.



North Shore Better at Home

Staying independent and socially connected are key ingredients to a healthy life.

The North Shore Better at Home Program supports local seniors by providing you with non-medical home services to enhance your independence and stay connected to the community.

JANUARY EVENTS

TUES 03 CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUP MEETING (ZOOM) TIME: 6:30-8:30PM	THURS 05 MEN'S SUPPORT GROUP MEETING (IN PERSON) TIME: 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM	WEDS 11 KOREAN GROUP MEETING (IN PERSON) TIME: 2:00-4:00PM
MON 16 PERSIAN GROUP MEETING (ZOOM) TIME: 6:00-8:00PM	TUES 31 BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT GROUP MEETING (ZOOM) TIME: 6:00-8:00PM	

FEBRUARY EVENTS

THURS 02 MEN'S SUPPORT GROUP MEETING (IN PERSON) TIME: 10:00AM-12:00PM	TUES 07 CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUP MEETING (ZOOM) TIME: 6:30-8:30PM	WEDS 08 KOREAN GROUP MEETING (IN PERSON) TIME: 2:00-4:00PM
MON 27 PERSIAN GROUP MEETING (ZOOM) TIME: 6:00-8:00PM		

GRATITUDE

Written by Mobina Fathi

In today's world, it is deceptively easy to lose sight of the things that matter and give us joy. You wake up every morning rushing to get to work/school. Then, meeting after meeting or class after class, maybe you fixate on an argument you had with your co-worker, or a bad mark you received on a test. You probably spend some time entertaining stress and anxiety about your career, future, money, and/or family. You come back home, go to bed and just like that, your day is over. Years go by and maybe when you retire, you think of all the days that went by, and here comes the regret. The regret of not appreciating everything you had in your life all those days.

One strategy to not take what you have in life for granted is to practice gratitude.

Gratitude helps us recognize the goodness of something we have received from our environment. According to a study conducted by McCullough et al. (2002), gratitude disposition is positively correlated with psychological and physical well-being, positive emotions, and improved social relationships. Their results also suggest that more grateful people enjoy life with more hope and a higher level of satisfaction (McCullough et al., 2002). People who practiced gratitude were found to feel positive emotions more frequently, and had less tendencies towards anxiety, stress, and depression (McCullough et al., 2002). The positive affect of gratitude can be linked to its role in increasing the levels of the serotonin neurotransmitter, which in turn triggers the brain stem to produce dopamine, a pleasure chemical (McCullough et al., 2002). Moreover, according to Emmons and McCullough (2003), people who made a note of things for which they felt grateful over the period of three weeks showed a reduction in stress levels, anxiety, negative physical symptoms, and had longer and better sleep. They were also more optimistic about their future compared to the control group who did not practice gratitude (Emmons & McCullough, 2003). Similarly, Southwell and Gould (2017) found that after only three weeks of completing a gratitude journal, participants who self-reported diagnoses of anxiety disorder and/or depression at the beginning of the study scored lower on measures such as stress level, anxiety, depression, and perceived sleep difficulties. On the other hand, these participants scored higher on measures related to overall physical and mental well-being (Southwell & Gould, 2017). In addition, studies show that students who use gratitude journaling experience higher levels of overall life satisfaction and reduced stress compared to the students who do not write a gratitude journal (Flinchbaugh et al., 2011). There are several gratitude interventions that can be used to induce or increase levels of gratitude (Jans-Beken et al., 2019). For instance, gratitude journaling, writing a gratitude letter, and the three good things (TGT) exercise (Jans-Beken et al., 2019).

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Gratitude (continued)

Gratitude journaling consists of writing on a regular basis about people, things, and events that one feels grateful for (Jans-Beken et al., 2019). In the case of a gratitude letter, the individual will write a letter to someone they are grateful for in life, but has never properly thanked, then the letter is read aloud to the intended recipient (Jans-Beken et al., 2019). The TGT exercise consists of writing three good things that happened in a specific period, ranging from once a day to once a week (Jans-Beken et al., 2019).

To conclude, gratitude makes us happier, as reminding ourselves of pleasing memories and positive aspects of our lives encourage us to see how meaningful our lives already are. Additionally, when we express our gratitude to people around us, we facilitate the formation of a deeper connection with them, which will in turn make them feel better as well.

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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

Next meetings: Tuesday, Jan. 3 & Tuesday Feb. 7 (on Zoom)

Meetings are currently on the first Tuesday evening of each month from 6:30 – 8:30pm.

Currently we are meeting on Zoom. For the Zoom link, please contact NSCR directly.

(photo credit – Paul McGrath)



Contact

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

Vic Gailunas (Caregiver Support Program Coordinator) ~ Vic.Gailunas@nscr.ca

Or Phone: 604-982-3320



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.

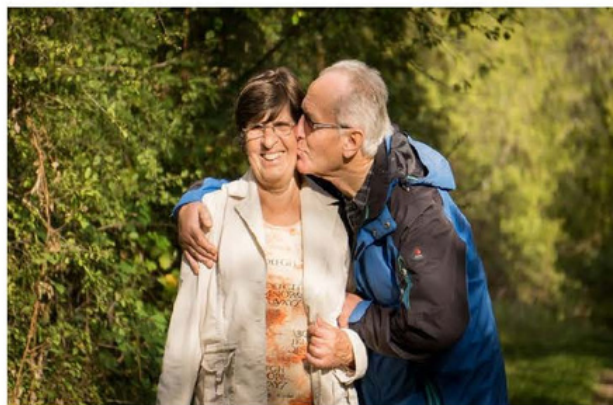
The group was designed to create community and offer a time of sharing, listening, and connecting for men with the unique experience of caregiving for their partners.

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

Monthly Meetings

We are back meeting in-person at the NSCR Community Room. Our meetings run on the first Thursday of each month, from 10:30am-12:30pm.

Next 2 meetings: Jan 5 & Feb. 2.



Contact

For more information and details, contact:

Vic Gailunas (Caregiver Support Program Coordinator) ~ Vic.Gailunas@nscr.ca

Pat Dean (Group Leader) ~ pdean@telus.net



KOREAN WELLNESS AND EDUCATION GROUP

North Shore Community Resources (NSCR) offers a wellness and education group specifically for the Korean community on the North Shore.

The group was designed to create community and offer a time of sharing, learning, and connecting for our Korean community.

Program participants are welcome to join us for a 2-hour session, held entirely in Korean, with guest speakers, resources, group interaction, and creative arts.

Monthly Meetings

We will be meeting in person in our NSCR Community Room. Our meetings run on the second Wednesday of each month, from 2:00-4:00pm.

Next Meetings: Jan. 11 & Feb. 8

(photo credit – Paul McGrath)



Contact

For more information and details, contact:

Yoonwon Lee (Group Leader) ~ infocwtc@gmail.com

Vic Gailunas (NSCR Caregiver Support Program Coordinator) ~ Vic.Gailunas@nscr.ca



PERSIAN WELLNESS AND EDUCATION GROUP

North Shore Community Resources (NSCR) offers a wellness and education group specifically for the Persian community on the North Shore.

The group was designed to create community and offer a time of sharing, learning, and connecting for our Persian community.

Program participants are welcome to join us for a 2-hour session, held entirely in Farsi, with guest speakers, resources, group interaction, and music.

Monthly Meetings

We are currently meeting on Zoom. Our meetings run on the third Monday of each month, from 6:00-8:00pm.

Next Meetings: Jan. 16 & Feb 20

(photo credit – Paul McGrath)



Contact

For more information and details, contact:

Noushin Beheshtipoor (Group Leader) ~ noushinbeheshtipoor@gmail.com

Vic Gailunas (NSCR Caregiver Support Program Coordinator) ~
Vic.Gailunas@nscr.ca



CAREGIVER BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT GROUP

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

Tuesday, January 31, 2023 on Zoom, 6:00-8:00PM



As we move into the New Year, things can seem more pronounced for those of us experiencing loss. It is a good time to consider our well-being, how to find meaning in grief, but also in hope and renewal of spirit.

For more information, to register, and for details, please contact:

Vic Gailunas
Caregiver Support Program Coordinator
604.982.3320
vic.gailunas@nscr.ca

Caregiver Interview: David S.

(Men's group member and Peer 2 Peer volunteer)

My journey into and through caregiving began in 2017, when it was clear that my wife Suzi was losing her memory and some of her usual mental agility. Suzi also realized that something was not right, so we saw a neurologist, who tested her, and suggested we go to the UBC Centre For Brain Health.

We met a truly great doctor there, who took good care of her, and after several tests confirmed that my Suzi did indeed have an early-onset form of Alzheimer's. When he said that there was a trial of a new drug just starting, and he could get her into it, we were very pleased. So, for the 18 months of the trial, my caregiving was mostly around making sure that Suzi took the trial drug, bringing her to UBC every couple of weeks, and, as her condition worsened, helping her with all the usual tasks of daily living.



Photo Credit – Susan Lapides

Finally, as her condition continued to decline, and her behaviour got more and more erratic, the doctor at UBC said, "You need to take her to Lion's Gate Hospital, where they will get her stabilized and take her into a care home".

She spent a month at Lion's Gate, and finally the social worker there told me that they had found a bed for her – not on the North Shore, but downtown. We got her settled, but it was clear that the home where they had placed her was too busy and too understaffed to provide Suzi with the help she needed. I was there every day, and I hired a couple of outside people to spend time with her; and I called her case manager at Vancouver Coastal Health every day, to see if they were able to find her a bed on the North Shore.

After a month downtown, we were able to move her to Lynn Valley – to Cedarview Lodge. I can't say enough good things about Cedarview Lodge – the care is wonderful, the activities really helped, and I could finally relax a little.

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Caregiver Interview (continued)

It was at this point that the Social Worker at Cedarview told me about a group that was forming for men supporting their partners through difficult health journeys. I immediately made contact, and the group began to meet – for the first several months, it was only three men, but it has since grown to around a dozen. The meetings were via Zoom until in-person meetings at NSCR became possible. We've been meeting in person there for a year or so.

Attending a support group has many benefits – just hearing other people's stories helped me to realize that I was not alone in my loneliness, that my feelings were natural and normal and shared.

I was also strongly encouraged by the group and by the social worker at Cedarview to take positive steps in caring for myself. I had my first massage ever, and found it so positive and reassuring that I now see my massage therapist once a week. I also hired an exercise physiologist to help me with the things I'd been avoiding – walking, strength-building, and range-of-motion exercises. I also have friends who help me by meeting up with me for coffee or a meal.

I have been very lucky in other respects; I now have 5 books in print, and spend a lot of time focused on writing and updating. The first to be published was "If the World Were a Village"*, which has now sold around a million in North America, and has been republished by presses in 36 countries around the world. This has allowed me to travel to schools and conferences around the world, teaching and sharing about the world.

Before Suzi got sick, I had been working as a "green-coat volunteer" at YVR Airport. With Suzi in care, the trip to the airport became problematic, so I am now volunteering at Lion's Gate Hospital, helping to screen people as they come in, and directing or accompanying people to the places they need to go within the hospital.

My life will never be the same – Suzi and I were married 55 years before she died in July of 2021 – but I can now wake up in the morning looking forward to the day.

***Editor's Note: "If the World Were a Village", David's book written for children, is available in the NSCR Library. David is part of NSCR's Peer 2 Peer support program and Men's Group.**