

March/April 2024

THE GRAPEVINE

North Shore Caregivers Newsletter



SO NOT THE EVEREADY BUNNY ANYMORE! BY CATHERINE BRYSON

"You can't pour from an empty cup," said Dr. Melanie Badali, during her presentation of the 2023 NSCR workshop 'Clarifying and Communicating Healthy Boundaries.'

Wise words indeed, and sage advice, for any caregiver on the caregiving 'roller coaster ride.' This shortish post aims to deal with the topic of Caregiver Burnout. It is actually a topic near and dear to my heart, as I suffer from fatigue myself. My wish is that by writing this, you, the reader, will recognize your symptoms and get help. If you suspect you or someone you love has Caregiver Burnout, then read on. (Of course, see your doctor if the fatigue is more intense, or is accompanied by other symptoms.)

Let me tell you a story to illustrate my point.

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So not the Eveready Bunny Anymore! (continued)

When I was a little girl, I lived in a French village in the Dordogne region of France: famous for, among other things, foie gras (goose liver pâté, with or without truffles) and wine. Yes, it was a special time in my life, I have to admit (beautiful and romantic castles, great food, lovely weather...) Anyway, in the village where we lived there was a well at the top of the hill. You know what I mean, like in medieval times. Sometimes we'd just drop a stone in so we could hear the echo sound from a distance, which was cool.

The point I'd like to make is that your wellness is like that well. When it is full, you can draw from it whenever you need to: for work, relationships, recreation, etc. (Speaking of recreation, when your internal 'well' is full, you can do great artwork, because the well is where all creative inspiration lives, in the 'chi', which means 'energy' in the Chinese language).



However, after many, many years of drawing from the well, or if there's a drought and suddenly large amounts of water were used, then maybe, eventually, that well would run dry and you'd be out of luck. Like walking in a desert, and no water anywhere. ('Water, water everywhere, and not a drop to drink'). Whenever you are caregiving, you draw from that well. If you are not mindful of your own self-care, eventually you can end up like the Eveready Bunny with no batteries.

Remember the cute Eveready Bunny ads on TV? I think that before I used to be like that, but now, no longer, hence the title of this post. But despair not, I'm going to list some tips that might help, and then some resources for you. And of course, a great photo of the Château de Monbazillac (Monbazillac Castle) also the site of the eponymous dessert wine of that name. (If you ever come across it, buy it, for it is truly delicious!)

But if your batteries do run out, then what? As Dr. Badali said: 'You can't pour from an empty cup.' And you can't draw water from the well, either. If you notice you've become more grouchy, or you are sleeping badly, or you are getting sick a lot—consider the following coping strategies that I learned at this workshop I recently attended, free and online, hosted by the Alzheimer Society of Toronto (they have excellent online workshops, all free).

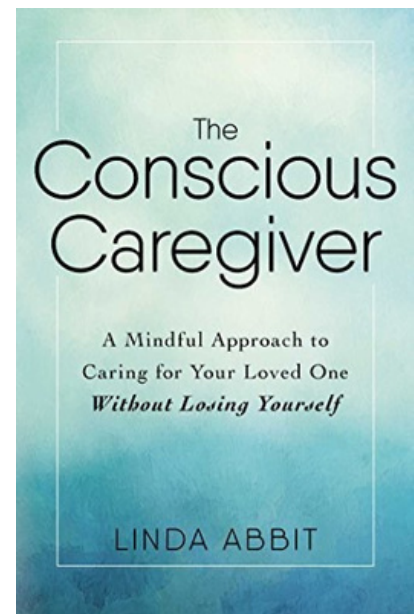
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So not the Eveready Bunny Anymore! (continued)

While they are not the panacea, (nothing is, short of winning the lottery, and even that, studies say, is not a guarantee of happiness), they do help.

Some Useful Coping Strategies Before Pressing the Panic Button:

- Accept, work through, and share your feelings with one other
- Be realistic (e.g. we are all human and therefore imperfect!)
- Humour is helpful
- Have a good cry/vent/laugh
- Take time for yourself (though I know this is 'easier said than done')
- Get help (no one, but no one, can do this alone. Reach out and attend the free NSCR online Caregiver Support Group, email Vic Gailiunas (for details, see resources below)
- Sometimes it helps to write out your feelings (e.g. a journal, but you can always do it on your phone using the Notes app)
- Prioritize your health (I cannot emphasize this enough). Avoid skipping medical or dental appointments because your caregiving schedule is so full. Take advantage of telemedicine if this is the case.



So, take good care (cliché though that may be) and 'Ring the bells that still can ring' (as Leonard Cohen wrote).

RESOURCES

NSCR Caregiver Support Program: Vic.gailiunas@nscr.ca

'Overcoming Emotional Burnout' by Allyson Hodge, 2020

'The Conscious Caregiver' by Linda Abbit (pictured above), 2017.

The Alzheimer's Society of BC

<https://alzheimer.ca/bc/en>

(See, in particular the free webinar recordings. See also the free Infolink helpline, (I found it helpful during my caregiving journey.)

The Château de Mombazillac (Mombazillac Castle, pictured) Dordogne, France.

Alzheimer Society of Toronto

<https://alz.to>



AGEISM & "IT'S NOT RIGHT!" 2-PART WORKSHOP



A FREE 2-part workshop: Wednesdays, April 17 & April 24, 1:00-2:15pm on Zoom

Presenter: Lorna Harding (North Shore Neighbourhood House)

LET'S TALK AGEISM Recognize it when you see it

Ageism is highly prevalent and is the most socially accepted and tolerated form of discrimination in Canada. Like sexism or racism, ageism is discrimination – based on someone's age. Ageism can occur at any point in our lifespan – regardless of how old we are – and may lead to others making judgements about our background, capability, mental or physical status, based only on their impression of our age.

IT'S NOT RIGHT! Recognizing warning signs of elder abuse

The It's Not Right! Neighbours, Friends & Families for Older Adults program is geared towards everyday individuals, residents, neighbours, family members, and friends of adults and older adults. This presentation will help you to recognize the warning signs and learn how to be supportive and safe. If you are an older adult experiencing abuse, this presentation can help you break the isolation and find support.

For more information and details, including the Zoom link, please contact:

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

MARCH EVENTS

TUES 05 CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUP MEETING (ZOOM) TIME: 6:30 - 8:30 PM	THURS 07 MEN'S SUPPORT GROUP MEETING (IN PERSON) TIME: 10:30 AM - 12:30 PM	WED 13 KOREAN GROUP MEETING (IN PERSON) TIME: 2:00 - 4:00PM
MON 18 PERSIAN GROUP MEETING (ZOOM) TIME: 6:00 - 8:00PM	TUES 26 BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT GROUP MEETING (ZOOM) TIME: 6:00 - 8:00PM	

APRIL EVENTS

TUES 02 CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUP MEETING (ZOOM) TIME: 6:30 - 8:30 PM	THURS 04 MEN'S SUPPORT GROUP MEETING (IN PERSON) TIME: 10:30 AM - 12:30 PM	WED 10 KOREAN GROUP MEETING (IN PERSON) TIME: 2:00 - 4:00PM
MON 15 PERSIAN GROUP MEETING (ZOOM) TIME: 6:00 - 8:00PM	WED 17 AGEISM & ELDER ABUSE WORKSHOP (ZOOM) W/ GUEST SPEAKER, LORNA HARDING (NORTH SHORE NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSE) TIME: 1:00 - 2:15PM	WED 24 AGEISM & ELDER ABUSE WORKSHOP (ZOOM) W/ GUEST SPEAKER, LORNA HARDING (NORTH SHORE NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSE) TIME: 1:00 - 2:15PM

Caregiver Interview: Alex N.

What has been your journey into, and through, caregiving?

It all began very gradually. My wife, Cali, and I lived in Germany. Somehow, she couldn't settle and we all thought she was homesick and just couldn't adapt to the German way of life. Little did we know that this was the beginning of a long journey with ups and many downs. She moved back to Canada in 2005, but somehow her issues were similar to the ones she had in Germany. It became evident something wasn't quite right. She was diagnosed with Huntington's disease in August 2007. I immigrated in December of the same year to Canada. So, here I am adjusting to a new country and learning to cope with Cali's degenerative disease. In the beginning it was somewhat easy dealing with the disease. For the first 9 months we lived on the island, and during the week I



worked in Vancouver. Cali was alone on the island during the week and was able to care of herself. After moving to Vancouver there was a steeper decline. She was able to be by herself during the day, but couldn't leave the house anymore alone. So she waited all day for me to come home and take her outside. As our loved one's abilities and capabilities decline, a caregiver sacrifices more and more of their own life, trying to make things work, often at the edge of our own patience and well-being. Cali was home with me for 7 years, and in the end, I had to give her showers and feed her. Then she stopped eating all together, and I had to make the decision to put a feeding tube in. This decision also meant Cali had to go into long-term care. The thought of putting her into a care home was always the scariest thought and was the steepest learning curve for me. Over the next 5 years I had to adjust to the fact that Cali's care was, to a huge degree, in other hands. Now, caregiving suddenly became advocating. Dealing with new emotions and challenges, at the same time trying to keep Cali's mind at ease became very challenging.

Cali passed away in 2019, and then a new adjustment came. Suddenly, you are not a caregiver anymore and a big purpose in your life is gone. Learning to leave the caregiving bubble and participate in "normal" life again took some time. Knowing I did what I had to do and being there to the very end consoled me. Knowing what I know today, I can say I would do it all over again. I was lucky Cali was a very grateful and kind person. I learned so much through this journey and met amazing people.

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What made you want to join a caregiver support group and how did you find out about the group at NSCR?

Cali's aunt, Louise, researched all lot of resources for us. One of them was the caregiver support group. Also, Cindy Bouvet's persistence (she was the facilitator of the group back then) was needed to convince me to join. I thought I didn't need a group like that, but it became a very important part of the journey.

What do you believe are some benefits of attending a caregiving group?

The biggest benefit I think is to find out there are others in a similar situation and you are not alone in the caregiving journey; to hear that other people have the same worries, frustrations, and often anger, as well. The group is a really good place to release these feelings since there are others who experience similar emotions. Since some caregivers are further along in their journey, newer caregivers

are further along in their journey, newer caregivers can draw from their experience and learn about resources and coping mechanisms in the group.

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

Going back to Cindy Bouvet, she said to me in the beginning "You are on a marathon, not a sprint. You have to make sure you take care of yourself otherwise you can't take care of your loved one". A big thing for me is exercise, like bike riding and hiking, and from time to time, going for a drink with friends. Also, every year and a half I go to see my family and friends back in Germany.



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 2 meetings:

March 5

April 2

Meetings are currently on the first Tuesday 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



CAREGIVER BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT GROUP

North Shore Community Resources (NSCR) offers a support group specifically for people experiencing grief 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, March 26, 2024 on Zoom, 6:00-8:00pm



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

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

Vic Gallunas
Caregiver Support Program Coordinator
604.982.3320
vic.gallunas@nscr.ca



MEN'S CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUP

North Shore Community Resources (NSCR) offers a support group specifically for male caregivers who support their spouses/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 to join us.

Monthly Meetings

We currently meet in-person at the NSCR Community Room on the first Thursday of each month, from 10:30am-12:30pm.

Next 2 meetings:

March 7

April 4



(photo credit – Paul McGrath)

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 2 Meetings:

March 13

April 10



(photo credit – Paul McGrath)

Contact

For more information and details, contact:

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

Vic Gailiunas (NSCR Caregiver Support Program Coordinator) ~ Vic.Gailiunas@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 2 Meetings:

March 18

April 15

(photo credit – Paul McGrath)



Contact

For more information and details, contact:

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

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