

THE GRAPEVINE

North Shore Caregivers Newsletter



All photo credits - Paul McGrath

FEATURED STORY

"Caregiver Expo 2024!"

by Vic Gailiunas

Caregiver Expo 2024!

By Vic Gailunas

On Saturday, May 11, we welcomed back the 6th annual Caregiver Expo at Silver Harbour Senior's Centre. A co-production between the North Shore News and North Shore Community Resources, we had sold out booths from various companies and agencies with a vested interest in caregiving, as well as 4 guest presentations with speakers from Vancouver Coastal Health, BC Brain Wellness, Assante Financial, and North Shore Neighbourhood House. These speakers offered powerful information and answered questions on various topics from ageism and elder abuse, to palliative care and MAID, to tax planning for senior's/caregivers, to brain health.

It was a beautiful sunny Saturday but, like last year's event, it didn't stop people from joining us. Attendees were able to gather informative resources and meet agency representatives in the flesh, as well as find answers to help them on their caregiving journey.

Also, like last year, I acted as MC for the event, introducing the speakers, while 2 of my wonderful NSCR colleagues, Yola and Alannah, kindly worked our booth so I could move around, meet people and do my hosting duties. This was my 2nd Expo and I truly feel it's a great event to shine the spotlight on family caregiving and explore ways to address its inherent struggles.

The people working the booths were more than willing to offer a smile and information and it occurred to me, as I've gotten to know many of these folks, that it really is a community.

The North Shore News ran a big pullout section just before the event, to which we happily contributed, full of salient content like profiles on our program's caregivers and testimonials from members on how our support groups, workshops, and resources have helped them. I'm sure I

can speak for all in our community, that their support of family caregiving on the North Shore is hugely appreciated.

Til next year!

Vic Gailunas
Caregiver Support Program Coordinator
NSCR



Finding Meaning and Care in a World That Seems Not to Really Care

By Catherine Bryson

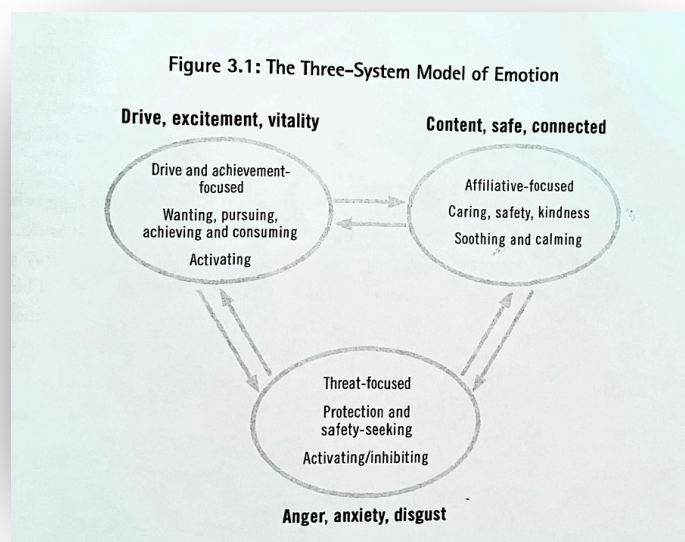
'...in exactly the same way that imagining a meal can stimulate sensations and feelings in our bodies linked to eating, our own thoughts and images might be able to stimulate our inner caring mentalities and brain systems that lead to soothing. If we can learn to be kind and relate to ourselves with a caring mentality - to send ourselves helpful messages when things are hard for us - we're more likely to stimulate those parts of our brain that respond to kindness. This will help us cope with stress and setbacks.' (Paul Gilbert 'The Compassionate Mind' p.214)

Poet William Blake's 'mind forg'd manacles' metaphor is an accurate illustration of how our minds can seemingly imprison us. In that sense, self-compassion is like the 'exit door' for difficult emotions, in the sense of self-soothing as in the quote above.

Caregiving is challenging enough these days even without extra 21st century stress. No need for the PNE, enough 'thrills and chills' can be found just in the experience of a typical day as a caregiver! This is why, as a tool for unconditional acceptance (which is the answer to 21st century stress), self-compassion is your next go-to tool for your Caregiving Survival Toolbox.

But first: just what is self-compassion? Self-compassion is the act of consciously directing a flow of loving kindness towards ourselves that soothes us, as would parent comforting a child. In this article, I will:

- Provide you with an introduction to the main concept of self-compassion
- Discuss the specific needs of the caregiver and why self-compassion is so crucial to survival as a caregiver
- The Rx: how can you use self-compassion as a self-care tool?



Part 1: What is the Self-Compassion Concept?

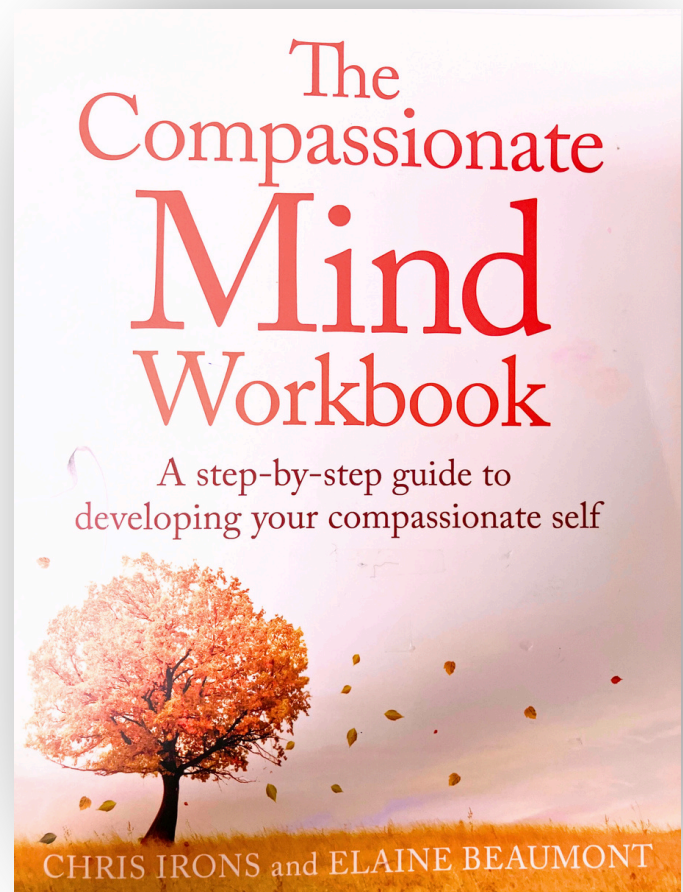
In her book on Self-Compassion (see Resources below for reference), which I highly recommend, along with others, self-compassion basically boils down to 3 main components. These are:

1. Kindness: In the face of the daunting, heroic, seemingly never-ending work of caregiving, we offer ourselves warmth and unconditional love.
2. Mindfulness: We become aware of our experience, just as it is, in the present moment. We are 'with' our feelings, not suppressing them.
3. Common Humanity: We recognize that, as caregivers, we are part of a larger community of caregivers, and have membership in the overall experience of the human journey, no matter where we might find ourselves in that process.

(I recommend you take a look at the image above 'The 3-System Model of Emotion' by Paul Gilbert, and even read his work, if you really want to dive deep into the literature on self-compassion.)

Part 2. What are the specific needs/situations of caregivers regarding self-compassion?

- The endless time crunch. There's a 30-second Self-Compassion Break I'll share with you in the Rx section that you can pack in your caregiving survival kit.
- Burnout: A very common experience almost universally felt by every caregiver on the planet. What are the top 3 signs of burnout? They are: 1) exhaustion, 2) depersonalization (you just don't care anymore), and 3) feelings of incompetence
- Feeling 'all alone'. With self-compassion, we become our own best friend—even while in a painful moment (especially while in a painful moment). At the very least, we can provide ourselves with some physical touch (grasp one of your hands, put your hand gently over your heart); and offer yourselves some words of kindness and support (such as: 'I know this is hard for you now') and don't forget the NSCR Caregiver Support Group, especially if you feel isolated and need to reach out. (I give you info on how to join that group if you are interested in the Resources below.)



Part 3. The Rx for Stress

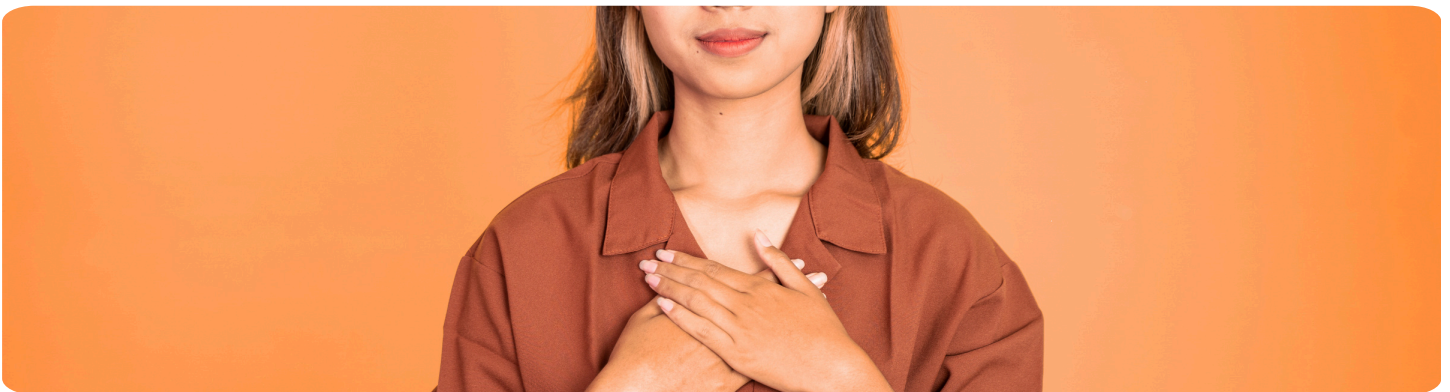
Self-compassion isn't rocket science folks. It's basically human warmth directed at ourselves. Compassion flowing 'inwards' rather than 'outwards' (to the care recipient.) I know that writing about feelings of self-compassion in the abstract isn't really the panacea for caregiving stress. You need the 'in medias res' for in the thick of the moment itself (when you're about to press the panic button.) So here it is: 30-second Emergency Self-Compassion Break. The Rx for what I call: 'Frankenstress.'

Step 1: Put your hand on your heart (gently). Say to yourself (silently): 'This is a moment of stress.' (Or, 'This is hard!')

Step 2: Then say: 'We all get stressed sometimes.'

Step 3: Then say, while still holding your hand over your heart: 'Because I'm stressed, I'm going to be super-kind to myself in this moment.'

And that's it. Tip: Try using your own words that really resonate with you personally.



I would also recommend that you complete the Self-Compassion Questionnaire on Kristin Neff's website (see Resources below.)

In a sense, however, I know that even this added Emergency Self-Compassion Break in your Caregiver Toolbox cannot be the panacea for the depth of pain that you feel. In truth, there really is no 'magic bullet'. All I can say is, consider the 30-Second Emergency Self-Compassion Break like giving a hankie to a distressed best friend in a painful moment, or like a hug. In fact, think of this whole article as like a hug, from one (previous) caregiver in the trenches to another on his/her/their caregiving journey. And we all need a hug, because caregiving is hard, and most of us get that. But, there are rewards too. Like playing your 91-year-old father Van Morrison's 'Brown-Eyed Girl' and seeing him smile. My advice to you is: truly savour those special moments.

Resources

'Kristin Neff's Website: <https://self-compassion.org>

'Self-Compassion' by Kristin Neff (2015)

'The Mindful Self-Compassion Workbook' by Kristin Neff and Christopher Germer (2018)

'The Compassionate Mind Workbook: A Step-by-Step Guide to Developing Your Compassionate Self' by Chris Irons and Elaine Beaumont (2017)

'The Compassionate Mind Approach to Recovering from Trauma' by Deborah Lee and Sophie James (2012)

North Shore Community Resources Caregiver Support Program, Caregiver Support Group (Monthly)
Contact: Vic Gailiunas, Caregiver Support Program Coordinator
vic.gailiunas@nscr.ca



Events Calendar

JULY

Tues
02

Caregiver Support Group Meeting (Zoom)

6:30 PM - 8:30 PM

Thurs
04

Men's Support Group Meeting (In Person)

10:30 AM - 12:30 PM

Wed
10

Korean Group Meeting (In Person)

2:00 PM - 4:00 PM

Mon
15

Persian Group Meeting (In Person)

6:00 PM - 8:00 PM

Mon
22

Bereavement Support Group Coffee Social
(In Person)

6:00 PM - 8:00 PM

AUGUST

Thurs
01

Men's Support Group Meeting (In Person)
with Corinne Stewart (VCH Home & Community Care)

10:30 AM - 12:30 PM

Tues
06

Caregiver Support Group Meeting
(In Person & Zoom)

6:30 PM - 8:30 PM

Mon
12

Bereavement Support Group Meeting (In Person)

6:00 PM - 8:00 PM

Wed
14

Korean Group Meeting (In Person)

2:00 PM - 4:00 PM

Mon
19

Persian Group Meeting (In Person)

6:00 PM - 8:00 PM

My Decade with NSCR

By Catherine Bryson

Way back in 2014, I was volunteering at a daycare (through North Shore Neighbourhood House) and one morning I happened to notice this ad for NSCR volunteers. Although I enjoyed volunteering at the daycare, I felt it was time for me to move on.

So, I emailed then Coordinator of the Caregiver Support Program, Karyn Davies, and became a volunteer blogger for the Caregiver Support Program Caregivers' Blog. Thus began my decade with NSCR.

I knew nothing about blogging, so I took a course on blogging at Capilano University, which was most helpful.

There are indeed many things I could say about my decade volunteering with NSCR, but upon reflection, this poem I wrote 'Room 203: Looking Back' says it more profoundly than anything else. I should explain room 203 is the Community Room at NSCR, where all the meetings and in particular, the Caregiver Support Group meeting, took place in the days before the pandemic.



Room 203: Looking Back

by Catherine Bryson

What has come and what is still to be
In Room 203
In my time, so far
A decade or so of men and women
Of many ages and from all walks of life
Rich and poor—
All alike, and yet so different
We labour on
With intrinsic worth
For one thing and one thing only:
Love,
Love for the dear ones
We would do anything if we could
And oh, the sadness, and the worry too
That 2:00 a.m.-can't-sleep feeling
Endless counting of sheep as the seconds
lowly tick by in that interval
Between night and day when
We all are so naked and alone.

Oh yes there is hope
There is hope
Strength in numbers
Alone we are but weak
Struggling up a long, long
Road, up the mountain
Yet together we en-courage
One another and
Sure-footed on the path
We carry on
We offer laughter
And shed many tears
Oh, these walls of Room 203!
If only they could talk...

What stories they would tell
These walls
We are all writing the story
As we are telling it

So, come one come all
To Room 203
I was and am glad to be
In Room 203, even virtually
It's not the room you see,
That matters.
It's the love that gives
Our lives such 'Sense
And Sensibility.'

With thanks to Karyn Davies and the subsequent Caregiver Support Program Coordinators:

Elizabeth Bishop
Melissa Wade
And our very own Vic Gailiunas

Although my days as a caregiver came to an abrupt end with my father's passing last Christmas, I carry on writing for the Caregivers' Blog. I feel it incumbent on me to pass on my experience and knowledge to a new generation of caregivers. As I wrote in 'My Caregiving Journey' (North Shore News May 11, 2022): 'It is the gift I give to those who supported me along the path. For the truth is, as we go forward on the path, we help each other and so we are never truly alone.'

And it is interesting how despite all the new 'versions' of me over the past decade, I persist in my writing, as the feminists say: 'nevertheless she persisted.' Persist in the belief that my words still have relevance, that is.

NSCR Caregiver Support Program Caregivers Blog
<https://northvancaregivers.wordpress.com>

NSCR Better at Home Program (This service is invaluable. It has helped me to continue to live independently longer.)

<http://seniors.nscr.ca/better-at-home>

Caregivers' Support Group

Please email Caregiver Support Program Coordinator Vic Gailiunas for more information and a link to the meeting.

Vic.gailiunas@nscr.ca

Thanks to the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction for providing me with a monthly honorarium that made it possible for me to continue my work.

Note on image: Cross-stitch I recently completed with one of my favourite quotes.





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: July 4 August 1- w/ guest speaker Corinne Stewart (Home & Community Care, Vancouver Coastal Health)



(photo credit – Paul McGrath)

Contact:

For more information and details, contact:

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

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



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.

Monday, July 22, 2024 Coffee Social In Person at our Community Room, 11:00am-12:30pm

Monday, August 12, 2024 Group Meeting In Person at our Community Room, 6:00-8:00pm



As we move into Summer, 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 Gailiunas
Caregiver Support Program Coordinator
604.982.3320
vic.gailiunas@nscr.ca

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:

July 2 - on Zoom

August 6 - In-Person & Zoom *note location and time change for this meeting to 6:00-8:00pm

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

For the Zoom links, 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 Gailiunas (Caregiver Support Program Coordinator) ~ Vic.Gailiunas@nscr.ca

Or Phone: 604-982-3320



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 in person. Our meetings run on the third Monday of each month from 6:00-8:00pm.

Next 2 Meetings:

July 15

August 19

(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

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.

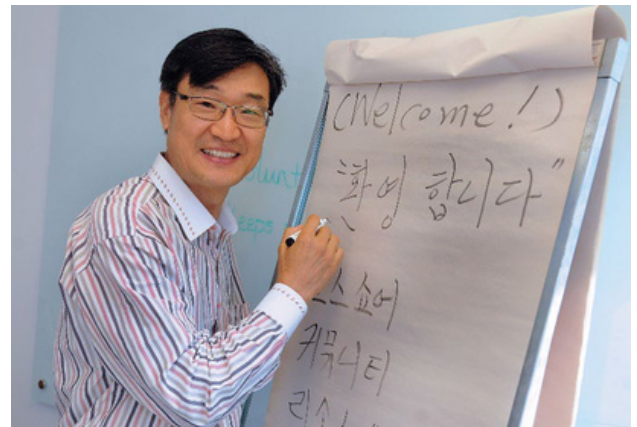
Monthly Meetings

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:

July 10

August 14



(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

THE GRAPEVINE

North Shore Caregivers Newsletter



North Shore
Community
Resources

If you'd like to help support NSCR and the work we do you can follow the link below to donate

[**DONATE NOW**](#)

We are thankful for all the support we get and couldn't help others without the generous help of patrons like you