



Family Caregivers  
of British Columbia

Family Caregivers of BC  
**EXPLORING YOUR  
RELATIONSHIP TO SELF AND  
OTHERS**

with Self-Compassion

Love rests on two pillars: surrender and autonomy. Our need for togetherness exists alongside our need for separateness.

Esther Perel





## **EXPLORING YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO SELF AND OTHERS**

I think it's safe to say, most of us are spending the most time we ever have with the people in our direct household. For some that might be with the person you are caring for and for others it is shifting to caring from afar or more time alone. Regardless of your situation, in the last month there have been some major adjustments in lifestyle, which means potentially a new way of caregiving.

Brene Brown is a research professor who has spent the past two decades studying courage, vulnerability, shame, and empathy. Her research is accessible and relatable, and she reminds us that, "imperfections are not inadequacies; they are reminders that we're all in this together." In order for us to feel and develop a connection with others, we must first relate and understand yourself. This takes courage and curiosity to meet yourself and others with vulnerability.

### **The Importance of Regular Self-Check-Ins**

- The cornerstone of self-care is self-awareness and in order to build a relationship with yourself you must first explore your emotions and needs (we all have them!)
- Check-in with how you are feeling first thing in the morning, Are there any ruminating thoughts or worries? Are there things to look forward to? Do any feelings or sensations stand out in your body? Continue to check-in with yourself during the day
- Become familiar and aware of your emotions by starting to label emotions as they arise. Can you witness and hold space for all emotions (even the more challenging ones)?
- Adjust your expectations according to how you are feeling, often low energy affects your productivity, ability to care and ability to be present
- If you are able to, share how you are feeling. A helpful technique is to give your feeling or energy a number on a scale of 10 - "I feel energetic right now, I'm at a 8" or "I feel emotionally exhausted, I am at a 2." This can provide context and understanding in your relationships and also support you in sharing the workload

### **Give yourself a Break**

- Self-compassion and being kind to yourself as you give care to another is vital, consider adjusting what is reasonable to do in a day or changing how you might go about caring
- COVID-19 may have shifted the amount of time you are around others or on your screen, give yourself permission to take a break - move your body, listen to music, look out the window, meditate/do yoga, read a book, etc.
- Think about the must-dos in your day and assign them using E.N.D (energizing, neutral, draining) and then decide how to approach them based on your energy levels

### **Establish your New Routine**

- A key element of staying grounded in uncertain times is to establish a reliable routine
- Routines look differently for each of us and you can decide what is important to you and the person you are caring for, and what it is not as important during this time
- Let go (for right now) of activities or things that add more stress to your life
- Clear is kind- communicate clearly to the person (people) you care for or live with
- Integrate time for enjoyment and play with the people you share space with and live alone at this time connect virtually with your support circle

### **Reach out to Shared Networks**

- Connecting with other caregivers and shared networks is an important part of maintaining relationships
- Having shared contacts and networks gives you something to talk about - for some, it will be wanting to talk to someone who is/was a caregiver and for others, it may be an old friend or your book club
- At a distance networks can be maintained and strengthened via telephone, texting or video chats -consider your support circles and those you can rely on for regular support
- Support is essential for caregivers and should not be left to chance- think of friends, family, neighbours and acquaintances as a circle surrounding you

### **Family Caregivers of BC Support and Resources**

If you are taking on the role of a caregiver that you wouldn't otherwise be doing, please check out [Home Alone Alliance](#), "How-To" videos and resource guides for topics on caregiver topics such as medical and nursing tasks.

Call the Family Caregivers of BC Support line Toll Free at 1-877-520-3267, Monday to Friday 8:30 am to 7 pm.

We can support you based on your unique needs, help bring awareness into your situation, listen to you, suggest ideas and resources.