## CAREGIVER CONNECTION







By Mechthild Maczewski, FCBC Caregiver **Support Coordinator** 

As we experience the second wave of COVID-19, increased isolation and the darker days of winter, the Canadian Mental Health Association points out just how important connections are: "We need each other more than ever as we live under the constraints of lock-down due to the pandemic. We need to be deliberate about our social connections because they are no longer built into our daily lives. Phone calls, video calls and other digital technologies offer excellent opportunities for connecting, even when we can't be in the same room. What is known as "passive" socializing - like

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#### In this issue

- How to keep your resilience battery recharged
- Did you know about LifeLabs mobile unit?
- What to do as someone's Personal Representative
- Intro to caregiving

Family Caregivers of BC is a registered non-profit dedicated 100% to supporting family caregivers.

Caregiver Support Line 1-877-520-3267 www.familycaregiversbc.ca listening to others – can foster social connection and reduce social isolation." (Social Connection is the Cure, Canadian Mental Health Association, www.mentalhealthweek.ca)

Our Caregiver Support Line provides one such opportunity for connection and our focus is on you, the caregiver. Our team welcomes every single call that we receive, listens with compassion and truly appreciates that you have taken the time to connect with us – we understand how busy your days are! We frequently receive calls from a family member or friend who is providing care and support to someone living with disease, disability or frailty due to aging. Care comes in many forms, from physical care, to shopping, cooking, financial and care coordination. Sometimes we receive calls from a health care provider or an employee of another community resource, looking for information to support their friend or client with.

Each call from a caregiver is unique and the conversations are multi-faceted. Our primary goal is to connect and support you with resources that match your specific and current needs. For example:

- We can suggest joining a Virtual Support Group that provides a space for connections with other caregivers and peer support,
- We can connect you with our Caregiver Coaching team, and they will offer free 1:1 Caregiver Coaching sessions designed to help you get the answers you need now,
- We can facilitate your connection with other community resources by providing an overview of the specific support services other agencies provide,
- We can facilitate a connection with your inner self, for example, by asking how you are and by offering resources, such as a 'self-compassion break' live on

- Facebook or a breathing exercise to do at home.
- We genuinely extend an invitation to you to connect and become part of a community of caregivers by receiving our ENews and printed Caregiver Connection Newsletter that highlight current information on upcoming virtual events and educational webinars.

Throughout the holiday season and beyond, we hope you will think of Family Caregivers of BC and the Caregiver Support Line as providing opportunities for connection. We look forward to your call! If you have any further ideas for connection that you would like to see Family Caregivers of BC provide for you, please feel free to send us an email at cgsupport@familycaregiversbc.ca

# Help build a stronger family caregiver community & make the future brighter



#### **Donate**

Support a future where family caregivers are valued, supported and included as partners in care, or donate to today's caregiver support and education programs.

Call toll-free at 1-877-520-3267 or donate online at Canada Helps FCBC is a registered charity (#12981 7771 RR0001). A charitable tax receipt will be issued for donations of \$20 or more.

Please make cheques payable to:

Family Caregivers Society of British Columbia #6-3318 Oak Street, Victoria, BC, V8X 1R1

#### Volunteer

Be a caregiver voice in working toward patient and family centred care. Contact us for more information.



### **Editor's Note**

Kate Landreth, Education and Learning Lead, Family Caregivers of BC

As I curated articles for the Winter Caregiver Connection Newsletter, the common theme woven through each thoughtful contribution was connection, cultivating connection to self, to others and to resources. Now is the time to practice softening our hearts where possible and cultivating connection, kindness, and compassion with ourselves and others. This is a practice that need not be burdensome. It is often the small, simple moments of connection that are most meaningful and impactful.

To tap into the natural flow of connection that is always around us, take a moment and reflect on your daily routine. At what points do you feel a sense of connection? What activities, thoughts or feelings signal a sense of connection to yourself? Is it a practice, something that you intentionally do? Is it a moment of stillness? Is it sharing a laugh with someone? Is it something unique and special to you?

Do you notice who or what you are feeling connected to? Is it a place, a spiritual practice, a friend, a family member, a partner, a spouse, a community, a political cause, or something completely different? Connections can come in so many different forms.

The relationship with yourself can become a solid foundation that everything else rests on. And when it becomes unsteady, everything

else around you may start to feel shaky too. This may be a good time to pause, check in with yourself and consider a practice that could support your personal foundation.

I came across an excerpt from "The Caregiver's Book: Caring for Another; Caring for Yourself" by James E. Miller, and it fits beautifully with the theme of Connection.

"As a caregiver, your strength is in your flexibility. To be strong, it is often thought, is to remain firm. To Lead, it is often thought, is to have all the answers. But genuine caregiving follows another set of rules. Sometimes one must unlearn what seems right so one can learn what works best. And often what works best in caregiving has nothing to do with being strong in the traditional sense. Caregiving is not about being uncompromisingly rigid, nor is it about knowing all the answers. Often what works best in caregiving is just the opposite: a willingness to be unsure, a readiness to bend. Often what works well is approaching your roles with a beginner's mind, so you are always exploring, always learning. What will help both caregiver and care receiver is an elasticity, so you can give and bend, without breaking."

From my heart to yours, Kate Landreth

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Family Caregivers of BC 1-877-520-3267 www.familycaregiversbc.ca

## The Resilience Battery: Why it's Important to Keep Yours Charged

By, Nikita Paddock, PHN, BScN, RYT

Resilience is often recognized after an event or situation that has pushed an individual, community, or group out of their comfort zone, or through trauma. Resilience can be better understood by comparing it to something we depend on: our smartphone battery. If you take a look at the upper corner of your cell phone, you will see a little battery icon. What level is yours reading? When did you charge it last?

#### **Creating Habit**

If you are like many people, you try to keep your phone charged by plugging it in each night. This is a habit that can prevent us from the added stress of having a low battery when we need it the most. Similarly, our resilience requires consistent practice and work to prevent us running low. Resilience is not a static destination or recognition of a lucky turnout, but an evolving way of being that requires work each day. We can intentionally use resilience practices to strengthen our resilience.

#### **Resilience Plug-ins**

Resilience plug-ins may be innate if you spend time in meditation, but for most of us, we have to try out a variety of types before we find the ones that charge us the best.

Regardless, almost all of these will charge us a little, so pick the ones you feel the most full after and keep a list in your phone or your wallet. Add to this list as you go through life and find activities or practices that make you feel safe, loved, and strong. I will share with you a list of my favourites:

**1.Time in nature:** Go for a long walk bringing awareness to the present. Focus on the temperature of the air, the smells, the distant

and near sounds, the energy inside you. Become fully engrossed in your surroundings and if you notice the mind wandering to the past or future, bring it back.

- 2. Serving others: The power of selfless service should be advertised as medicine for ourselves and communities. Serving others reminds us that we have purpose. When we help others, we release oxytocin, the happiness chemical, and our cortisol lowers, which means we feel less stressed and we can make better decisions for ourselves. Serving others also fosters connection and reminds us that we are not alone, leading to greater resilience!
- 3. Gratitude Journaling: Gratitude journaling is a powerful resilience tool. All it takes is a paper and pen. Write down as many things as you can that you are grateful for. With each one, pause and see if you can feel gratitude. You can even repeat "thank you" in your head or aloud. Gratitude journaling rewires our neural pathways in the brain. The more we do it, the more we will be naturally grateful for the things we have. Gratitude promotes resilience by shifting us from a negative to a positive mindset in a realistic way.

#### **External Factors**

Some phones hold less charge. They may be old, store too much, or we may not know why they don't hold charge. These phones need charging more often. Sometimes it is valuable to carry a charger or back-up power source when you have a phone like this.

Humans alike have different paths that have either strengthened their resilience muscle or weakened it. Trauma, past experiences, and even the role models in our lives affect our levels of resilience, so some people will need

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### **Caregiver Self Assessment**

Start by responding to the statements below to recognize the positive steps you are already taking to ensure you stay healthy, and to identify areas where you might consider action to help keep you resilient.

1. I am satisfied with my overall personal health.

Yes No

2. I have the skills and information I need in order to give the required care.

Yes No

3. I maintain regular contact with family and friends and make time to spend with them.

Yes No

4. I can ask for and accept help when it's offered. I know I don't have to, and can't do this alone.

Yes No

5. I am able to communicate effectively with the person I am caring for, as well as others involved in their care.

Yes No

6. I am aware of community resources available to help support me in my caregiver role.

Yes No

7. I am aware of caregiver support groups (locally or online) and/or have a supportive network where I can share my challenges and successes.

Yes No

8. I make use of respite options available and take breaks from my caregiving responsibilities.

Yes No

9. I have gathered information about the progression of my care recipient's disease so I know what to expect and can prepare in advance as best I can.

Yes No

10. I know how to navigate the healthcare system and who to ask if, and when I need help.

Yes No

#### What's your score?

Give yourself one point for every "Yes" answer.

**8-10 Points:** You are already taking several important actions to take care of yourself. Look closely at statements where you answered "No," and consider whether accessing more resources would be helpful.

**5-7 Points:** You understand the importance of self-care, but you're not always able to take action to support yourself. Consider any barriers you have to self-care, and ask yourself whether these are external (you

don't know about the resources that exist to help you) or internal (you have trouble asking for and receiving support). Sharing the care is essential to finding enough time and energy for yourself. Choose one statement you responded "No" to work on this week.

Fewer than 5 Points: Without contributing to your own well-being, caregiving quickly becomes overwhelming and unsustainable. Use this list of ten statements as a guide to creating a self-care plan, and start with learning more about the caregiver support resources available to guide you. It will be important for you to identify resources you're not currently using in your social circle, such as family, friends, acquaintances and neighbours, to share the care and create some much-needed space for addressing your own wellbeing.

Adapted from Robert S. Stall, M.D. (2002)Caregiver's HandbookBuffalo, New York

Find resources to help you on Family Caregivers of BC's website: www.familycaregiversbc.ca

Need help now? Call our toll-free Caregiver Support Line 1-877-520-3267

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to keep their back-up batteries nearby. These can be found in the resilience practices that we find the most strengthening. Sometimes, people naturally have a full battery, but with many phone calls or even roaming, it can become unexpectedly drained. Have you ever left the flashlight on? Similarly, people may have excellent resilience to external stress in the past, but with prolonged stress or a cascade of traumatic events, resilience may become depleted and it is essential to recharge to prevent a mental health crisis or burnout.

#### **Prioritize Your Battery**

Prioritizing your resilience charge means prioritizing yourself holistically. Our health and well-being are dependent on so many internal and external factors including ones out of our control due to the COVID-19 pandemic, so it is essential right now that people focus on the things they can control.

If we do not charge our resilience batteries frequently, we will burnout. The COVID-19 pandemic has been compared to a marathon, rather than a sprint. The rates of suicide,

depression, anxiety, as well as feelings of hopelessness and despair are widespread. People are experiencing ongoing stress and trauma affecting all areas of their lives. Coping mechanisms previously practiced are requiring people to pivot and find other methods of staying well. We do have hope. I am encouraging you to create a resilience charging kit. Inside, keep a list of resilience practices you like, and ones you haven't tried yet. You may also share tools with friends and family to promote resilience in one another.

If you feel low levels of resilience, reach out to a trusted professional. Provincial Mental Health Resources: https://www2.gov.bc.ca/ gov/content/mental-health-support-in-bc/moodand-anxiety

During this time remember: There is hope. There is peace. There is purpose.

Nikita is the Founder of I AM RESILIENT.® www.nikitapaddock.com

## A Caregiver's Experience: LifeLabs Mobile Unit to the Rescue

Pat Smith

My husband, Ron, had a stroke eight years ago. Initially, he was completely paralyzed on his right side and came home from hospital in a wheelchair. He now walks using a cane or a walker. During his lengthy rehabilitation, he wrote a book about his experience,"The Defiant Mind – Living Inside a Stroke", published in 2016. Recently, he was hospitalized again, this time with congestive

heart failure. After returning home he required weekly blood work so that his medications could be adjusted.

Ron and I live in rural Nanoose Bay. The prospect of me driving him to Parksville to LifeLabs for all the bloodwork was daunting given Ron's disability, his weakened condition, and the long line-ups outdoors because of COVID-19. Unable to make weekly appointments online (LifeLabs in Parksville is currently booking appointments three weeks in advance) I thought to explain our situation

to see if there was some way, I might be able to make an appointment. I called the LifeLabs 1-800 line and three hours later I got a call back from the LifeLabs' Parksville supervisor. In the meantime, I told her, Ron and I had decided the better option would be to go to our doctor's clinic in Lantzville and get the blood samples taken there. "Well," said the supervisor, "I think we can do a lot better than that. We have a mobile unit that your husband qualifies for."

Now, once a week, on a Monday, Karli and

sometimes Susan, come to our home to take Ron's blood samples. I had no idea what a relief receiving this service would be. Instead of enduring a full morning's ordeal getting Ron to LifeLabs for his bloodwork, we now have the five-minute procedure done in our home by a cheerful technician.

I had no idea that such a service existed nor how grateful Ron and I would be to receive it.

To find out if you or your care recipient may qualify for home services with LifeLabs call 1-800-431-7206.

## Tasty and Healthy Pumpkin Spice Trail Mix

This is a simple and tasty treat that you can make in your slow cooker. You could also cook them in the oven too! Feel free to add or take out any nuts or ingredients to meet your dietary needs.

#### Ingredients:

- 1/2 2/3 cup cashews
- 2 1/4 cups walnut chopped or halves
- 1/2- 1/3 cup chopped pecans
- 1/2 cup pumpkin seeds
- 1 cup dark chocolate and/or cacao nibs
- 1 cup dried cranberries
- 1 tbsp pumpkin spice
- 2 tbsp coconut oil
- 1 tsp vanilla
- 1/4 cup coconut sugar (or maple syrup, more like clusters when cooked)
- dash of sea salt
- · extra cinnamon if desired
- parchment paper

#### Steps:

- 1.Place nuts and seeds in the slow cooker
- 2.Add sugar, spices, coconut oil and salt and stir together so it's coated well and combined
- 3.Cover and place on high for 1 hour or 90 minutes if your nuts need longer to roast. Be sure to stir once or twice during the cooking process
- 4.Once you think the nuts look browned enough, remove from slow cooker and spread into an even

layer on parchment paper

- 5.Allow mixture to dry, then transfer to a mixing bowl
- 6.Add in chocolate and cranberries to combine
- 7.Store in airtight containers or zip bag and share with others

## Healthy Benefits in a 'Nutshell':

Cashew, walnuts, and pecans are the top healthiest nuts.

Each are high in magnesium, vitamin E, potassium, and zinc. Pumpkin seeds are highest in zinc. Cashews highest in magnesium. The real winner are the walnuts. Walnuts contain highest amount of Omega -3 fatty acids. Now, the cool thing about walnuts and omega-3 fatty acids is that they can help increase



serotonin levels. Increase in serotonin levels can help combat depression.

Pumpkin (nutmeg, cloves, ginger, cinnamon) plus the coconut oil are anti-inflammatory foods that can keep your body's immune system in check.

From www.cottercrunch.com/slow-cooker-paleopumpkin-spice-trail-mix

## Being a Personal Representative When Someone Passes Away

Amy-Alexandra Jaworsky, Victoria lawyer

So, you have been asked to act as an executor or perhaps someone has passed away without appointing one and you have been asked to take on the responsibility of administering their estate. When a person appoints a personal representative to act for them in their Will, they are referred to as an Executor. When a person dies without a Will and a personal representative is appointed by the court to act for the estate, they are referred to as an Administrator. In this article, I refer to both as a personal representative.

What does a personal representative do? Your responsibilities kick in after your friend or family member dies. Briefly, you are responsible for dealing with the deceased's remains, taking control of their assets, searching for the most recent Will, converting the assets into cash, paying their debts and distributing the remainder according to the terms of the Will, or, if there is no Will, according to the rules set out in the wills legislation. Simple, right? Not so fast! The devil is in the details, as they say. There are many other tasks that the personal representative must do and they can range from clearing out the deceased's home, cancelling services, notifying friends and relatives of the death, arranging for the funeral, dealing with the beneficiaries, filing the deceased's income tax return, managing or wrapping up their business and also in some cases applying for probate (if there is a Will) or a grant of letters of administration (if the person dies without a Will). In this article I refer to both as an estate grant.

Probate is the term used to describe an application to the court after someone dies. An estate grant is the document the court issues after the probate application is successful. The estate grant is official proof that the Will (if there is one) is valid and it is also proof that the

personal representative has the authority to act on behalf of the deceased.

An estate grant is not always required to deal with the deceased's assets but here are a few common reasons why a personal representative might want to obtain one:

- 1. If the personal representative is selling the deceased's home, the land title office requires the estate grant to process the transfer.
- 2. Depending on the type of asset, the entity in charge of the asset may require probate for instance, depending on how much money the deceased had in their bank account, the bank may require an estate grant prior to releasing the money to the personal representative.
- 3. The deadline for starting certain court actions in relation to the estate starts to run from the date the estate grant is issued so if no estate grant is issued, the clock does not start to run.

Sound complicated? It can be – and it is a lot of work with significant responsibility. A personal representative can be found personally liable if they do not do a proper job. But what happens if someone appointed you as their personal representative without your knowledge? The good news is that just because someone appointed you, it does not mean you are required to take on the job. As long as you have not started to deal with the deceased's assets, you are permitted to refuse the appointment.

For this reason, a Will maker should carefully consider who they appoint as their personal representative and also make sure that the person is willing to take on the job. As a personal representative, you want to make sure you fully understand the commitment that will be required of you before you agree to take on the role.

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## **New to Caregiving?**

Wendy Johnstone, FCBC Provincial Program Consultant

Being a caregiver can creep up on you. Maybe it starts by dropping by your mom's house and doing her laundry or taking her to a doctor's appointment. Maybe you call your adult daughter with depression every day to check in. Then you find yourself doing the grocery shopping and refilling prescriptions for your mom. Your daughter starts calling you to make her dinner a few times a week. Gradually, you find yourself doing more and more. You may not even realize it; you are making a commitment to care for someone else.

Sometimes, caregiving is triggered by a major health event or acute diagnosis, such as a serious fall, motor vehicle accident, stroke, heart attack or cancer diagnosis. Maybe you suddenly realize that dad's memory lapses have become more serious or your wife was diagnosed with cancer. Life as you know it stops, and all your energy goes to caring for the person who is ill.

#### The Different Phases of Caregiving

Even if caregiving is a common experience, your role as a caregiver will vary across the time you are caring. The length of your role

and the intensity will vary depending on the care recipient's disease. Your role will be very dynamic and may take on very different directions at any given time<sup>1</sup>. For caregivers who are being faced with this new role, they often are most entrenched in the awareness and unfolding responsibilities phases. The phases of caregiving are not linear; it depends on so many factors of the caregiving situation.

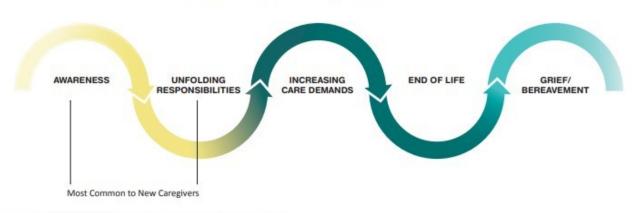
#### **Getting Started in your New Role**

Given the complexity and ever-changing role of caregiving, caregivers often feel better when they are prepared and supported. Here are some concrete ways for you to start supporting yourself and the person you are caring for.

#### **Finding Information**

The first stages of caregiving can feel the most challenging. Finding the right information is a first step. Get the best possible diagnosis, which includes tests and appointments with a family doctor or specialists. This is helpful to first know what disease or illness you are dealing with. Next, determine what supports you need (informational, emotional, access to publicly-funded and private resources), and learn what skills you may need (depending on diagnosis you may need skills and training – ask the health care team, caregiver support

#### Generally speaking, the caregiving phases<sup>2</sup> are:



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and/or disease-specific programs).

#### **Getting your Paperwork Organized**

Discuss what planning is needed, financially and legally. This would include taking steps to identify programs and resources that might provide financial relief, advanced health-care directive representation agreement, power of attorney, a will, etc.

#### **Explaining your Role**

Patient and family-centred care is an approach to health care that respects the central role caregivers play in a care recipient's life. Increasing awareness of your role to health care professionals is one way to help voice your needs.

#### **Asking for Help**

Learning to accept help early in your caregiving role and knowing who to ask will make it easier down the road. FCBC can help by listening, providing emotional support and answering questions related to caregiving.

Call our toll-free line (BC) at 1-877-520-3267. We're available Mon-Fri, 8:30am to 7pm.

#### **Building a Support Network**

Think of your family, friends, neighbours and acquaintances as part of a "circle" surrounding you. Embrace and use your support networks, it is essential for caregivers and shouldn't be left up to chance.

#### **Building Your Personal Resilience**

Resilience helps make the hard parts of caregiving do-able. When caregivers feel resilient, it can expand their capacity to move through difficult situations that are part of their caregiving role. See our Resiliency Battery article in this edition!

#### References

1. R. C. Talley, J. E. Crews (eds.), Multiple Dimensions of Caregiving and Disability, Caregiving: Research, Practice, Policy, DOI 10.1007/978-1-4614-3384-2\_2, © Springer Science & Business Media New York 2012

2. See 1

## Join a Community Caregiver Support Group

Due to COVID-19 please check with the individual support group to know how they are providing support at this time

Visit www.familycaregiversbc.ca/family-caregiversupport-groups/ to find details on caregiver support groups in your community:

Support groups can be found in the following BC communities:

Burnaby Campbell River Comox Valley Coquitlam Cowichan Valley Cranbrook Delta Gabriola Island East Kootenay West Kootenay

Kamloops Keremeos Lake Country
Langley
Maple Ridge
Mayne Island
Nanaimo
North Vancouver
Oliver
Pender Island

Penticton
Port Alberni
Port Coquitlam
Port Moody
Princeton
Prince George
Richmond
Salt Spring Island

Sidney
Smithers
Summerland
Surrey
Vancouver
Victoria



## **Disease/Condition Specific Caregiver Support**

**ALS Society of BC** 

1-800-708-3228

**Alzheimer Society of BC** 

1-800-667-3742

First Link Dementia Helpline 1-800-936-6033

**BC Brain Injury Association** 

604-984-1212

**British Columbia Schizophrenia Society** 

1-888-888-0029

**BC Cancer Agency** 

bccancer.bc.ca/contact

**Here to Help (for Mental Health)** 

310-6789 (no area code; free available 24 hours a

day)

**Huntington's Society of BC** 

BC Resource Center: 604-822-7195

MS Society of Canada (BC)

1-800-268-7582

**Parkinson Society BC** 

1-800-668-3330

**Stroke Recovery Association of BC** 

1-888-313-3377

### **Provincial Resources**

**Anti Fraud Centre** 

www.antifraudcentre.ca 1-888-495-8501

BC 211 - non-medical

www.bc211.ca

#### **BC Health Authority General Enquiry Lines**

- Fraser Health 1-855-412-2121
- Interior Health 250-980-1400
- Island Health 250-388-2273 or 1-888-533-2273
- Vancouver Coastal Health 604-263-7377
- Northern Health 250-565-7317

#### **BC Ministry of Health**

www.gov.bc.ca/health

Visit www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthtopics and put in the search term "Caregiver".

Visit www.patientsaspartners.ca for the free self-management activities offered through Patients as Partners

#### **BC Palliative Care Benefits**

www.health.gov.bc.ca/pharme/outgoing/palliative.html

#### **BC Seniors Guide**

www.gov.bc.ca/seniors-guide PDF available in English, Chinese, French, Korean, Vietnamese, Punjabi and Farsi Hard copy available in English, Chinese, French, Punjabi 1-877- 952-3181 **Crisis Centre BC** 

crisiscentre.bc.ca/contact-us 1-800-SUICIDE (1-800-784-2433)

**Family Caregivers of British Columbia** 

www.familycaregiversbc.ca

Caregiver Support Line: 1-877-520-3267

**Find Support BC** 

findsupportbc.com

HealthLink BC - medical

www.healthlinkbc.ca

Call 811 anytime 24/7 to speak to a nurse.

Here to Help - mental health

www.heretohelp.bc.ca

Pain BC

www.painbc.ca

The Nidus Personal Planning Resource Centre

www.nidus.ca

email: info@nidus.ca

**Seniors First** 

www.seniorsfirstbc.ca

**SAIL - Seniors Abuse & Information Line** 

Vancouver - Metro 604-437-1940

Toll Free: 1-866-437-1940 (8am-8pm daily) Language Interpretation (9am-4pm M-F)

www.seniorsfirstbc.ca

**UBC Pharmacists Clinic** 

www.pharmsci.ubc.ca/pharmacists-clinic

## We Can Help RIGHT NOW





BC Caregiver Support Line 1-877-520-3267
Toll-free, available Mon-Fri, 8:30am-7pm



info@familycaregiversbc.ca



www.familycaregiversbc.ca



Results of our survey will be out in 2021



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