



Family Caregivers  
of British Columbia

— Let us help —

# THE EMOTIONAL SIDE OF CAREGIVING

## SUDDEN SHIFTS IN CAREGIVING

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*There is a beauty and fulfilment in the unexpected, and growth and learning in the process.*

Often, becoming a caregiver is a role we aren't prepared for. This shift can be unanticipated or taken on by choice or by necessity - and sometimes a mix of all three. But there is beauty and fulfilment in the unexpected, and growth and learning in the process. With some forward thinking and changes to your regular routine and mindset, becoming a caregiver can become one of life's greatest gifts.



### **A New Role**

You may suddenly need to provide care to a family member or friend for a variety of reasons. You could have some advance notice of your new role - for example, if you have an aging parent who suddenly requires additional care. At other times, the shift will be sudden - perhaps by way of an unexpected medical condition or emergency. Whatever the circumstance, this new and unexpected role as a caregiver can be challenging.

### **Navigating Sudden Shifts**

A positive mindset about change is key. When you think positively, cortisol decreases and the brain produces serotonin, creating a feeling of well-being. When serotonin levels are normal, we feel happy, calmer, less anxious, more focused and more emotionally stable (Scaccia, 2017). While a shift in life circumstances will not always feel positive, it can be helpful to approach change by asking yourself about the gifts this change could bring to your life.

## An Outlet for Your Thoughts

It is normal to lament 'what was' as you navigate a shift to being a caregiver. Your old life might have felt easier, or better, than what you are dealing with now. Instead of holding in your emotions, give them an outlet. Journal about your feelings, speak with a trusted friend about what you are going through, join a caregiver support group, or create some art that reflects your emotions.



## Self-Care

At FCBC, we emphasize self-care - because it is vitally important to one's well-being. When you suddenly become a caregiver, try to keep your usual routines where possible. Your health and well-being are important, so try to not lose yourself entirely in your new role. Take the time to go for your regular walk or engage in your usual social routines as a way to re-charge your own battery.

## Practice Gratitude

Numerous studies over the past decade have found that people who consciously count their blessings tend to be happier and less depressed. Becoming a family or friend caregiver is not always something for which individuals feel grateful - it can be a hard road - but finding a moment in your day to consider what you are grateful for yields health benefits to you. Perhaps it is the additional time you get with your care recipient, your own ability to navigate change, or the learnings of your new role that fill you with gratitude.

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***Often the most unexpected, unpredictable moments in life are the ones that leave the biggest impression and that teach us to roll with the punches.***”

***Natalya Neidhart***

## FURTHER RESOURCES:



Visit the [Caregiver Learning Centre: Read](#) for more articles.



View some of our webinars and videos in [the Watch section](#).



[Listen to a podcast](#) to learn more about self-care and well-being.



Join our [Free Virtual Support Groups](#).



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