

CAREGIVER CONNECTION



Family Caregivers
of British Columbia

— Let us help —

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Summer Holidays

By Wendy Johnstone, Director of Programs and Innovation, FCBC

Like most people, during summer months, the desire for family caregivers to get away for a weekend or an extended vacation is often top of mind. Going from contemplation to implementation can create a great deal of stress for both the family caregiver and the care recipient.

Legitimate concerns and worries include: Does the person I'm caring for need overnight care, and who could do this? How much will it cost? My mom has dementia and doesn't want anyone else to care for her but me.

Taking a break is not only important for caregivers; it's essential. Without enough time away from caregiving duties, feelings of resentment and burnout may present themselves more readily. Being able to trust someone else to take care of the person being cared for, gaining clearer insight into your current situation, and reconnecting with yourself and your family are just a few ways caregivers can benefit from a holiday.

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

BC CAREGIVER SUPPORT LINE:
1-877-520-3267
familycaregiversbc.ca

Here are some tips to make going on holiday a little easier:
Clone yourself: Okay, maybe not literally, but do find a replacement caregiver or a network of support. It may be family or friends or you could decide to hire someone. It all depends on how much help and care the person you are caring for needs, as well as the length of time away and financial resources available.

Introduction: Schedule time for the caregiver to meet the care recipient prior to leaving. This provides an opportunity to increase comfort levels about you leaving and gives the alternative caregiver additional comfort with the daily or weekly routine.

Checklists: It's better to be over-prepared than under-prepared! Having detailed instructions for the caregiver and the care recipient will help ease your mind while you are away. Where possible, ask the person being cared for to help you with it.

Join a Community Caregiver Support Group

Family Caregivers of BC has in-person and virtual support groups to help you find community support and meet your needs as a caregiver. Visit www.familycaregiversbc.ca/get-help/other-community-supports to find details on caregiver support groups in your community.

Support groups can be found in the following B.C. communities:

Abbotsford	Delta	Maple Ridge	Port Alberni	Smithers
Burnaby	Gabriola Island	Mayne Island	Port Coquitlam	Summerland
Campbell River	East Kootenay	Nanaimo	Princeton	Surrey
Chilliwack	Kamloops	Nelson	Prince George	Terrace
Comox Valley	Keremeos	North Vancouver	Quadra Island	Vancouver
Coquitlam	Lake Country	Oliver	Richmond	Victoria
Cowichan Valley	Langley	Pender Island	Salt Spring Island	West Kootenay
Cranbrook		Penticton	Sidney	
		Pitt Meadows		

Financial matters: Make sure all bills are pre-paid, or set to automatically paid and that cash can be accessed easily to meet expenses or emergency expenditures.

Emergency contact: Keep a list of emergency telephone numbers and places of where you are staying with the caregiver and another trusted source. It's not a bad idea to call the care recipient's doctor, case manager or, if they are in residential care, the head nurse prior to leaving and let them know you will be traveling and how they can reach you in an emergency.

Emergency plan: Talking about what needs to be done in a medical emergency like an allergic reaction, stroke, or broken hip is important. A signed healthcare proxy or representation agreement should be in place and its whereabouts are known.

Start early: Yes, that seems obvious! However, trips can sneak up on us quickly. We suggest families give themselves at least six months to plan for respite or to organize care, especially the first time.

Don't spend every day of your holiday feeling guilty about being away! Enjoy yourself knowing that the person you are caring for is in good hands.

Editor's Note

Kate Landreth, Education, and Learning Lead, FCBC

Summer is here and with this new season, we see bright, vibrant wildflowers, and the smell of fresh-cut lawns. We wake up to the sounds of birds chirping and the touch of light, summer linens. And if you are like me, you savor the taste of mint-chocolate chip ice cream on a warm summer's day. In each stage of our lives, in even the most challenging seasons, we can find joy and happiness in the small, simple, and often overlooked things in everyday life. That may be an overly optimistic statement, especially since caregivers are often juggling many competing priorities, and feeling stressed and rundown. However, that is the very reason I am highlighting the concept of microjoys. Microjoys are small, easily accessible moments of joy that can be experienced despite our current circumstances. Using your senses: sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch is the gateway to discovering and experiencing small moments of joy. The more you notice, the more you enjoy. I invite you, as you read the articles and are prompted to tap into specific senses, to take a moment of pause. You may just notice glimmers of joy when you do!

The Summer Caregiver Connection Edition is packed like a full beach bag with information, strategies, and tools to support your caregiving. Wendy Johnstone, our new Director of Programs and Innovation shares an article all about preparing to take a summer holiday as a caregiver. In this article, there are practical ways to make going on a holiday a little easier. Identifying as a caregiver is important, not only so you can advocate and support your care recipient, but so you too can receive support. 'Do you consider yourself a caregiver?' written by Rick Lauber highlights reasons many caregivers may not identify and provides valuable reasons why it is helpful to see this a role you fill. In our 'Dear Caregiver Support Line' article, we discuss the importance of healthy eating in relation to brain and body health, which segways perfectly into the article on building caregiver resiliency. Amy-Alexandra Jaworsky, a local lawyer practicing in the areas of wills, probates, and residential real estate explains Section 7 Representation Agreement (RA-7) and when and why this would be needed, and lastly there is an article about financial health and practical ways to save by Anne Arbour, Credit Counselling Society. The topics and themes of our articles come from your feedback and insightful stories. If there are topics of interest that you would like to learn more about, please connect with me. I strive to offer educational programming that resonates with and supports you.

I will leave you with a personal story from my recent early days of being a new mom. I decided when I was in the depths of anxiety and feeling uncertain about my new job title, I would photograph flowers on my daily walks. These natural wonders were a reminder of the colour and life around me, even when I wasn't necessarily feeling so bright and vibrant. I look back now at these photos and feel both the joy and the pain of the experience, and thankfully it allowed me to process my experience and emotions. Finding glimmers of joy is a practice I have continued to incorporate into my daily life to bring presence and novelty.

From my heart to yours,

Kate



Do You Consider Yourself a Caregiver?

By Rick Lauber (www.ricklauber.com)

When helping and/or supporting an aging loved one, are you a loving son, daughter, spouse, or partner? Or are you a caregiver? Making the distinction isn't always easy. Self-identifying your role correctly is important, yet despite our country's aging population requiring more family members to provide vital care at many levels, those family members may not do so.

Why don't family members properly self-identify as caregivers? Consider the following possible reasons:

Being uncertain about the term: The "caregiver" designation remains a mystery to many who may not completely understand the meaning. As the dutiful son, I began by feeling I was only helping Mom and Dad as they aged and started to decline both mentally and physically. Family members may also feel that others may not recognize the role either and choose to avoid the topic of conversation.

Being embarrassed: Family members may be hesitant to admit that their parents are aging and are less able to function independently. There may be a reluctance to acknowledge that they may not completely understand an aging parent's medical diagnosis and could use some help and support. As Dad's memory faded due to Alzheimer's disease and Mom weakened from Leukemia, I also shied away from explaining the full situation (wanting to keep both their personal affairs private).

Becoming a burden: By constantly talking about the many related struggles of the job, a family caregiver may feel that he/she is draining others. Yes, there will be those who will tire of this conversation, but there will be others who genuinely wish to help and can learn from your experiences.

Avoiding the facts: Aging, becoming sick, and passing away can all be unpleasant topics to think about. A family member may choose to avoid these facts or postpone the inevitable by not identifying as a caregiver.

Avoiding physical care: Caregivers may be visualized as professional doctors and/or nurses who will focus on hands-on care (e.g. medication delivery, wound care, bathing, dressing/undressing, toileting, etc.). But caregivers can assist in other ways and if a family member chooses another caregiving path, he/she may not completely self-identify as a caregiver.

Why would family members want to self-identify as caregivers?

Increasing public awareness: By calling themselves caregivers, family members can introduce the term to friends and/or colleagues who will become more familiar with the role.

Improving the relationship with healthcare professionals: Family members who self-identify as caregivers can better rise to the same level as doctors and nurses. Discussing matters on similar ground may lead to creating a better rapport.

Getting more support: Without identifying yourself as a caregiver, it will be much harder to find the right resources and support that can help you in your role. Family Caregivers of BC has tons of online resources, in addition to caregiver support groups.



FINDING MOMENTS OF JOY

Pause from reading and look around.

What do you see?

Can you spot anything colourful
in your surroundings?

Is there anything you haven't
noticed before?

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Disease-based organizations often have caregiver support resources and groups.

Building transferable job skills: Leaving a career to provide care is common for family caregivers; however, their help will not be required indefinitely, and they will need to return to the workforce. By stating “Caregiver” on a resume they can better explain a lengthy gap without a paying job and highlight new or enhanced transferable skills an employer will appreciate (e.g., better communicating, learning, organizing, researching, and/or delegating).

Acknowledging that you are a caregiver (and much more than just a family member...) may be difficult to do, but it is important to self-identify, embrace this role, and help others understand the important work that you do.

*Rick Lauber is a former co-caregiver, author, and an accomplished freelance writer. Lauber has written two books, *Caregiver’s Guide for Canadians* and *The Successful Caregiver’s Guide* as valuable resources for caregivers. He has also served as a voluntary Board of Directors member for Caregivers Alberta.*



FINDING MOMENTS OF JOY

What sounds do you hear right now?

What is the farthest sound you can hear?

Dear Caregiver Support Line

I have been hearing that there is a connection between what we eat and brain health when it comes to dementia. I am very interested in learning more about this because I am caregiving for my mother, who has Alzheimer's disease. I'd like to do what I can to improve her cognitive health. Can you help me understand more about brain health and diet?

*With Thanks,
Hungry for Knowledge*

Dear Hungry for Knowledge,
Thank you for reaching out to us at the Caregiver Support Line. Here is an article we have put together to answer your question and provide some information.

Sincerely,
The CSL Team

A Brain-Healthy Diet

As life expectancy lengthens for most of the world, the incidence of dementia and cognitive decline is also increasing. There are several lifestyle factors that are key to keeping the brain optimally functioning. These include diet, exercise, sleep, hydration, and stress reduction. We will be using this article to share some information about how nutrition can contribute to good brain health.

Insulin Resistance in the Brain

What we eat provides nutrients for cognitive functioning and can potentially reduce brain inflammation. Scientific research has made a strong connection between Alzheimer’s disease and insulin resistance, a hallmark of Type 2 diabetes, but occurring in the brain. The term Type 3 Diabetes is now being used in health media and literature to refer to Alzheimer’s, but don’t expect to hear it in your doctor’s office just yet. Some researchers have

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asserted that insulin deficiency is a key factor in the cognitive decline seen in Alzheimer's disease. Insulin resistance in the brain has been linked to mental health issues, depression, lower dopamine levels, cognitive decline, and brain fog, to name a few symptoms. Insulin resistance occurs when neurons in the brain become unable to respond to insulin, which is essential for basic tasks, including memory and learning.

Food As Medicine

What we eat fuels our bodies and our brains. A brain-healthy diet controls insulin and balances blood sugar. It is plant-rich, including all the colorful compounds (reds, blues, yellows, greens, oranges and purples) found in fruits and vegetables. Eating as many of these as possible that are fresh as possible provides added folate and vitamins for a healthy brain. The brain needs good fats to be healthy and this includes olive oil, avocados, nuts (especially walnuts), and seeds. Tea and coffee also contribute to good brain health through caffeine, which might also help solidify new memories.

The Gut Brain Connection

What does your gut have to do with your brain? Great question! Substances made by bacteria in your gut can get into the blood, just like nutrients in food travel through the gut wall into the blood. In addition, there are nerve connections between the brain and gut and bacteria in the gut can send signals through those nerves to the brain. Your gut bacteria, also known as your gut microbiome, regulates many bodily functions from creating vitamins to controlling the immune system to supporting brain function. This microbiome also depends on a colorful and fibre-filled diet. Nutrient dense anti-inflammatory eating has been associated with a reduced risk of many chronic diseases and in improved microbiome and brain health. Research over the past decade has found that gut bacteria may have an impact on our emotions and on our brains.

Supporting Healthy Eating for Dementia

Diet and nutrition are integral to all components of health, including mental health, and dementia. By ensuring a balanced diet, rich in colorful fruits and vegetables, healthy fats, and fibre, we can support those living with dementia to maintain the best brain health possible. In the recorded webinar, "Living Well With Dementia Through Nutrition", Dr.

Heather Keller talked about the importance of nutrition, and our relationship with food as part of living well with dementia.

<https://youtu.be/YVDI31Tdqqw>

Another support for cognition is a new service being offered in Victoria. It is called the Memory and Aging Clinic and is available through Vancouver Island Psychological Services. They offer a range of services to help older adults maintain cognitive health and manage cognitive changes as well as support and education for families and caregivers. They have two offices; one in View Royal and one in Royal Oak. Their website is www.vipsychology.ca. Phone is 250-727-7060.



FINDING MOMENTS OF JOY

**Get a drink or a small snack and
take your time to enjoy the taste
without being rushed.**



Legal Segment: Representation Agreement Section 7

By Amy-Alexandra Jaworsky

Any adult who is mentally capable can authorize a trusted person to deal with their financial and legal matters by signing a Power of Attorney. That adult can also authorize a trusted person to act on their behalf in relation to health and personal care matters by signing a Section 9 Representation Agreement (we refer to it as an RA-9). A Power of Attorney is the gold standard for power over financial and legal matters and an RA-9 is the gold standard for power over health care and personal care matters.

But what if a person has cognitive difficulties due to an accident or injury or because they are getting on in years or if they have trouble understanding information or making decisions on their own for some other reason? Although this is precisely the situation where a person would need a representative, they may not be able to meet the capacity requirements to make a Power of Attorney or an RA-9.

One possible solution may be for the adult to appoint a trusted person by signing a Section 7 Representation Agreement (we refer to it as an RA-7). An RA-7 can be described as a less powerful cousin of the Power of Attorney and the RA-9 combined into one document with built-in limitations and safety checks on authority. An RA-7 can permit a representative to help the adult make decisions about certain health and personal care matters or about certain financial and legal matters (or all of these together). There is no specific test for capacity but factors to consider when deciding if the adult can sign an RA-7 include whether they can communicate a desire to make an RA-7, whether they understand that the RA-7 allows the representative to make decisions for them and whether the person they are appointing is someone with whom they have a trusting relationship.

An RA-7 has limitations and built-in safety checks because it does not give blanket authority for all decisions. An RA-7 only permits dealing with the specific routine financial matters listed in section 2 of the regulations to the Representation Agreement Act (like paying bills, depositing funds, filing taxes for example) but it does not include the authority to lend or gift the adult's property, use the adult's credit cards or deal with the adult's land.

To be valid, there are specific formalities that must be satisfied – if there is only one representative appointed to take care of financial matters and they are not the spouse of the adult, a monitor must agree to oversee the actions of the representative. The representative, the monitor and the witnesses to the adult's signature must also sign and attach a certificate to the RA-7.

Whether an RA-7 is appropriate depends on the adult's circumstances and the type of assistance that the adult needs. For more information about representation agreements:

- Peoples Law School: peoplelawschool.ca
- Nidus Personal Planning Resource Centre: www.nidus.ca

Amy-Alexandra Jaworsky is a Victoria lawyer practicing in the areas of wills, probate, and residential real estate matters. amy@islandlawoffice.ca / 250.858.0344

Increase Your Resiliency

Adapted from an article by M. Allison Reeves, M.A., Registered Clinical Counsellor

This life is to be experienced well, not simply endured. As a family caregiver, you can expect to have many demands placed on you: by yourself, by your family, by the medical system, by your friends, by your neighbors, and even by those who populate your dreams.

Here are three concepts that are helpful to increase resiliency:

- being proactive;
- shifting out of crisis management; and
- doing at least the basics to satisfy physical, psychological, and spiritual health.

When you are being reactive, you need to keep on your toes; it means being hyper-vigilant and never relaxed. You need to be continually learning new strategies and you experience exhaustion. Feelings commonly experienced are guilt, worry, resentment, frustration, and anger.

In contrast, being proactive allows you to manage your caregiving role. Anticipating what is ahead and thinking through which activities require your presence and which can be delegated is a sign you are being proactive. Delegation allows you to share the burden of chores and decisions with others and it allows you to be a part of a care community. Though everyone does things differently, being proactive reminds you that you are not alone and others have skills and attitudes which complement yours. Being proactive also allows more time to think, deliberate, and process all that is coming up for you. Being a caregiver reflects your personal philosophy as well as your personal circumstances and is only part of your life. If it is taking over your life, you are acting more from a reactive stance.

Shifting out of **crisis management** and quick fixes to long-term strategies can increase your resiliency. Caregiver burnout often happens when we are stuck in crisis mode. Being in that state for long periods of time drains your adrenalin, increases fatigue, and makes you more susceptible to stress. Here are three pillars of health, with practices that will help lower your stress and increase your resilience.

Physical resiliency: This includes eating nutritious and

healthy foods, taking nutritional supplements when needed, drinking lots of water, sleeping well, and integrating movement into your day. We don't often think of touch as a physical need, but receiving and giving heartfelt touch is also an essential physical human need.

Psychological resiliency: This includes establishing your own boundaries, being present-focused, addressing and healing past issues, having a non-judgmental attitude, being kind and surrounding yourself with kind people, practicing self-compassion, recognizing which issues are important and letting go of others, keeping in contact with people who are not problem-focused and having time alone. Starting to develop and strengthen even one of these supports your psychological resilience.

Spiritual resiliency: This includes connecting to something bigger than yourself, for some this could be a religious practice, for others it is connecting with nature, animals, and mother earth. It is remembering we are all connected and none of us is alone and no matter how it is accessed, spiritual health offers people many intangible benefits of community.

Starting to consider these three pillars of health in your life and then integrating a few practices into your daily life will help to increase your resilience. These practices do not need to be big or profound, it is often the small, consistent steps that make the biggest impact in our daily life.

FINDING MOMENTS OF JOY



Put your hand on your heart and take a big breath in and sigh out. Repeat that a few times.

What do you feel when you touch your chest right now? Recall a time that you received a warm hug, how did it feel? Physical touch is a human imperative, we are meant to touch and be touched, be in the company of others, and make emotional connections.

Practical Ways to Save

Anne Arbour, Director of Strategic Partnership and Education at Credit Counselling Society

You've probably heard that old saying: Take care of the pennies, and the dollars will take care of themselves. That's very often the case when it comes to saving money on your regular household expenses. A few proactive tweaks here, a change in habit there, and soon you'll be able to see those savings really add up.

How? Make it a practice to think about the way you are using things around the house and then apply a combination of common sense, some old-fashioned wisdom, and some modern resources like apps to find new and/or tried-and-true ways to save.

Some ideas to try:

- Unplug charging cords, power cords, or small electronics when they're not in use to cut standby power consumption.
- Only run the dishwasher, washing machine, or dryer when you have a full load, for savings on both water and electricity. Bonus points for not using the dryer at all. Hanging your clothes to dry where and when possible will not only save electricity but could extend the life of your clothes as well.
- Turn off the tap while you brush your teeth or shave.
- Review your tv, internet, and cell phone packages regularly. Are you using all the data and features you're paying for? Or are you regularly exceeding your limits and incurring overage fees? Switching to a more appropriately sized plan could help.
- Are you really using all those apps you are paying for monthly or annually? Audit your habits and usage regularly to identify potential savings.



- Free apps that can save or make you money might be worth a look though – like Flipp or Checkout51.
- Explore your local public library. Borrowing books instead of purchasing them is the obvious benefit, but today's libraries offer so much more. From music to movies to video games, courses, lectures, and more, libraries are terrific – and largely free - community resources.
- Subscribe to your local city/township/regional newsletter to stay up to date on free local festivals and events.
- Look for free days at zoos and museums too. Some places may have free admission for children under a certain age.
- Shopping at thrift stores or attending a clothing swap is a great way to freshen up your wardrobe, declutter your own closet, and a great way to practice sustainability too.

Which will you try first?

Anne Arbour is the Director of Strategic Partnerships and Education at the Credit Counselling Society, a not-for-profit service dedicated to helping consumers manage their credit, debts and budgets, and financial wellness.

How resilient are you feeling as a caregiver?

Check-in with yourself to learn more about where your strengths in resiliency lie.

Consider how you've been feeling this past week. If you strongly disagree with a statement, circle "1". If you are neutral about the statement, circle "3". If you strongly agree with the statement, circle "5".

1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree	
1. In general, I feel I am managing the stress of being a caregiver.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I am able to keep interested in things that are important to me.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I am able to stay connected with my family and friends.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I feel my life has meaning.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I feel flexible and able to adjust to challenging situations.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I can usually find something to laugh about.	1	2	3	4	5
7. When something changes with the person I am caring for, I can usually take it in stride.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I feel my role as a caregiver has meaning.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I feel proud of who I am.	1	2	3	4	5
10. My belief in myself helps me get through harder times.	1	2	3	4	5

Look at the items where you rated yourself highly (score 4 or 5). Think of these as your "resilience strengths", ways in which you are already dealing with your caregiver role, that are helping you.

Now look at those items where you gave yourself a lower score (1 or 2). Think about one change that could help bring the score higher in that area. Try that one thing in the next week to help build on your existing strengths and experience.



FINDING MOMENTS OF JOY

Open your window or step outside and take a few deep breaths.

What do you smell? If you have flowers close by, pause on your next walk and smell the fresh blooms.

DISEASE/CONDITION SPECIFIC CAREGIVER SUPPORT

ALS Society of BC www.alsbc.ca/	1-800-708-3228	Here to Help (Mental Health) heretohelpbc.ca (no area code; free available 24 hours)	310-6789
Alzheimer Society of BC alzheimer.ca/bc/en	1-800-667-3742	Huntington British Columbia Resource Center 604-822-7195 chd.med.ubc.ca/home/hsc-resource-centre/	
First Link Dementia Helpline	1-800-936-6033		
BC Brain Injury Association brainstreams.ca	604-984-1212	MS Society of Canada mssociety.ca	1-800-268-7582
B.C Schizophrenia Society bcss.org	1-888-888-0029	Parkinson Society B.C. parkinson.bc.ca	1-800-668-3330
BC Cancer Agency bccancer.bc.ca/contact		Stroke Recovery Association of BC strokerecoverybc.ca	1-888-313-3377

PROVINCIAL SUPPORT RESOURCES

Anti Fraud Centre antifraudcentre.ca	1-888-495-8501	Crisis Centre BC Crisiscentre.bc.ca	1-800-SUICIDE 1-800-784-2433
BC211—non-medical www.bc211.ca		Family Caregivers of British Columbia familycaregiversbc.ca Caregiver Support Line (toll free)	1-877-520-3267
BC Association of Community Response Networks bccrns.ca / info@bccrns.ca		Find Support BC findsupportbc.com	
B.C. Health Authority General Inquiry Lines Fraser Health 1-855-412-2121 Interior Health 250-388-2273 or 250-980-1400 Island Health 1-888-533-2273 Vancouver Coastal Health 604-263-7377 Northern Health 250-565-7317		First Nations Health Authority fnha.ca	1-866-913-0033
B.C. Ministry of Health www.gov.bc.ca/health <ul style="list-style-type: none">Visit www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthtopics and enter “caregiver in the search fieldVisit www.patientsaspartners.ca for the free self-management activities		HealthLinkBC—medical— healthlinkbc.ca Call 811 any time 24/7 to speak with a nurse.	
B.C. Palliative Care Benefits www.health.gov.bc.ca/pharme/outgoing/_palliatibe.html		Pain BC painbc.ca	1-844-880-PAIN 1-844-880-7246
BC Seniors Guide gov.bc.ca/seniors-guide PDF Available in English, Chinese, French, Korean, Vietnamese, Punjabi and Farsi, Hard copy available	1-877-952-3181	Nidus Personal Planning Resource Centre nidus.ca / info@nidus.ca	
		Seniors First www.seniorsfirstbc.ca	
		SAIL—Seniors Abuse and Information Line Vancouver Metro 604-437-1940 Toll Free 1-800-437-1940	
		UBC Pharmacists Clinic pharmsci.ubc.ca/pharmacists-clinic	604-827-2584

We Can Help Right Now!



BC Caregivers Support Line 1-877-520-3267

Monday to Friday 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Toll-free, here to support you!



**Family Caregivers
of British Columbia**

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info@familycaregiversbc.ca

www.familycaregiversbc.ca

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