Caregiver Connection



Newsletter

— Let us help —



When Caregiving Gets Complicated: Managing Family Disagreements

By Sharon Sutherland, Executive Director, Mediate BC Lori Frank, Director of Child Welfare Initiatives, Mediate BC

Family caregivers know that conflicts are common when supporting family members. Conflicts may arise as care needs change or from disagreements about including the care recipient's wishes in decision-making. Cultural values, generational roles, financial strain, unclear divisions of costs and responsibilities, and end-of-life decisions can escalate family disagreements. Conflicts can also emerge with health professionals, care home staff, and disability benefits administrators.

While conflicts will occur, it's possible to address concerns constructively to maintain healthy family relationships and support the well-being of the care recipient. Here are a few approaches and additional resources for further learning.

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Call the BC Caregiver Support Line:

1-877-520-3267

Monday – Friday | 8:30 am to 5:00 pm

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Editor's Note

By Marjan Beikzadeh Education and Learning Lead, FCBC

As we embark on this journey of caregiving, it's essential to recognize that each step we take can lead to greater understanding and connection. In this issue, we focus on the complexities of navigating the caregiving journey, highlighting the need for self-reflection, self-care, and effective communication. Caregiving is not just about meeting the needs of our loved ones; it's also about discovering our strengths and acknowledging our challenges along the way.

Embrace this opportunity for growth and self-discovery, as it will enrich both your life and the lives of those you care for. I encourage you to reflect on your own unique caregiving style and create routines that support your health and happiness. Remember, you are not alone in this experience; together, we can navigate the ups and downs with resilience and grace.

From my heart to yours, Marjan Beikzadeh

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When Avoidance is Not Helping

We often avoid raising concerns over small disagreements in hopes that conflict will "blow over" or because it is "just not worth it". This may be especially true when you are already managing the emotional toll of caregiving. Unfortunately, for caregivers, the little disagreements can add up. Frustration can build on both sides and lead to a confrontation when one or both people are feeling especially angry. The consequence is usually an unpleasant and unproductive discussion where individuals can't listen to each other effectively and simply keep insisting on their own perspectives.

If you are avoiding raising a topic because you dread a difficult discussion, think about whether a delayed discussion will be worse. Even if you are just losing patience about a lot of little things, you can prevent worse conflict by addressing the concerns now.

Prepare for the Discussion

When people are in conflict, they often feel angry and defensive. These emotions can make it harder to listen for understanding. Instead, we tend to listen to argue: we hear what we need to make our own points rather than to consider theirs. This tendency can be greatly reduced by preparing for difficult conversations.

Think about how to ensure that everyone involved is as comfortable as they possibly can be. Choose a time and place that feels safe for everyone, and invite the other person to join you for a discussion. Make sure that everyone has time to prepare. How would you feel if someone sprung a problem on you and expected you to discuss solutions immediately?

Would it be better to have someone else there? Would the other person feel better if they could bring someone? What is the most balanced way you can think of to frame the topics you want to discuss?



Tips for a Difficult Conversation

- Focus on shared goals (e.g., quality of life
- for the care recipient).
- Don't assume you know what others are thinking and feeling.
- Share your needs and feelings.
- Remain open and flexible to solutions.

Finding Help

You can improve your skills in dealing with conflict through courses or conflict coaching.

For immediate help or support for a serious conflict, you may want to contact a mediator. Mediators help everyone involved in the conflict to share their concerns and work to resolve difficulties. They can help with almost any type of conflict. Learn more at: https://mediatebc.com/

Small Practices, Big Impact: Building Resilience in Caregiving

By Aaron Yukich, Caregiver Rx Social Prescribing Project Lead, Family Caregivers of BC (FCBC)

In partnership with the Dementia Caregiver Resilience Clinic (DCRC) at St. Paul's Hospital in Vancouver, the FCBC team recently held a powerful three-part caregiver workshop series designed to support the well-being and personal resilience of those caring for someone.

The Core Skills for Caregiver Well-being and Resilience workshop focused on three key themes: the importance of caregiver self-care, the impact of depleting versus nurturing and supportive activities on caregiver resilience, and the power of self-compassion. Each session included guided exercises, reflection prompts, and group discussions that helped participants develop and strengthen self-care practices for use in their daily lives.

A central feature of the series was learning and using the S.T.O.P. Practice—a simple, powerful mindfulness tool designed to help caregivers pause, breathe, and check in with themselves before responding to the demands of caregiving. This and other techniques like the *Self-Compassion Break* and the identification of personal "refuges" (daily habits that bring strength, meaning and joy) offered caregivers a toolkit of brief, nurturing practices to integrate into their routines, even during the busiest and most challenging of days.

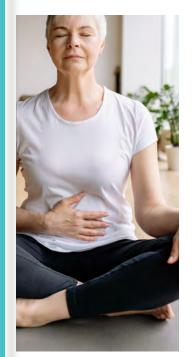
Caregivers in attendance were able to reflect on what practices were most meaningful to them in their caregiving journey. One participant reflected, "This gave me the self-care skills and hope I needed to continue supporting my husband at home."

Stay tuned for future opportunities to join the next Core Skills for Caregiver Well-being and Resilience workshop and discover simple ways to care for yourself, one moment at a time.

Learn more about our upcoming events at: https://www.familycaregiversbc.ca/calendar



Try the S.T.O.P. Practice and Journal Your Experience



- **S:** Stop what you are doing. Consciously hit the pause button and take a moment out of your current thoughts or activities.
- **T:** Take 3 slow deep breaths. Breathe in through your nose to the count of 4, pause for 2, breathe out to the count of 6. Focus on the sensations of breathing and feel your body slowing down.
- O: Observe what's happening inside you. What body sensations are you aware of? What thoughts are passing through your mind? What feelings or emotions are present? There is no need to change them—just become aware of them and notice them.
- **P:** Pause once again. Ask yourself, what is most important to pay attention to right now—what am I needing? Give yourself some praise for having taken this time to check in with yourself. Finally, proceed to the next moment of your day with this expanded awareness.

A New Family Dynamic: From Independence to Caregiver

By Karen McDermott & Janine Harriman, authors of The Family Caregivers' Companion to Caring for Aging



Caring for aging parents can shift family dynamics in unexpected ways. This short article explores the emotional and practical journey many adult children face as they move from independence to caregiving and outlines key decision points that can help during this transition.

The writing is on the wall: the parent or loved one is in decline, losing memory or the ability to care for themselves. Disease is kicking in. Safety is becoming an issue. Pots are burning on the stove. Someone slipped in the bath. Medications are missed or taken all at once. There's no food in the house. Doctor's appointments are becoming more frequent.

As children, we sometimes see this, and we sometimes we don't. We may live far away or have no relationship with our parents. We have our own families to care for. Then one day, life unexpectedly changes. Now what? A few things need to be determined:

1. What are your parent's desires?

Are you dealing with one parent or two? In Canada, no one is forced into a care facility. If they are competent and can make their own decisions, even if it's considered a 'bad' one, the parent has the right to decide. Only in certain scenarios can someone else make a decision: if the patient has psychosis, advanced dementia, or is unconscious for an extended time. An independent third party may assess and make the call. It's important to have Power of Attorney and Health Care Directive (sometimes also referenced as Representation Agreements) paperwork done before these situations.

2. How much care is needed?

This will help determine whether home care is possible at the current location or in another home, like the family caregiver's home.

3. Who's doing the caregiving?

Is there someone in the family who will step into the role? Will the parents move in with one of the children or vice versa? Will the kids do the caregiving, and to what degree? What services can come from outside caregivers? What changes or equipment are needed to make the home safe, such as shower chairs or stairlifts? What's the budget? When do family caregivers or doctors decide this isn't an option anymore?

4. If home care is not possible, what are the steps to looking at alternate housing and care options?

Are independent and assistive living housing viable options where parents can stay independent but access services when needed? Or, are you looking at long-term care facilities?

These are big, life-altering questions. The more seriously these are considered and discussed among family members, the better the outcome for everyone involved.



Helpful Resources

- Power of Attorney & Health Care Directives: Ensure you have your legal documents in place.
- Home Safety Checklist: Consider using a checklist to evaluate your parents' home for safety. Look for potential hazards like loose rugs, inadequate lighting, or cluttered walkways.
- Community Support Services: Explore local services that provide assistance to caregivers, such as respite care or meal delivery programs. Check with local health authorities for options.

Websites like **canada.ca**, **gov.bc.ca** and **Nidus.ca** provide information on how to set these up. You can use their search bar to look for specific resources.

You can also call our Caregiver Support Line at **1-877-520-3267**, and we will help to connect you with the appropriate resources.



Dear Caregiver Support Line

By Ibukun Babarinde, Caregiver Support Specialist, FCBC

"

I've been caring for my mother, who's been battling terminal cancer for the past year. As her condition worsens, I feel deep sadness about the loss coming. It's hard to watch her decline. I mourn who she used to be while being there for her now.

I want to be strong, but the emotional weight is overwhelming. I feel anxious, drained, and often isolated in my grief. How do other caregivers cope, and what strategies can help me get through this while still giving my mother the care she needs?

- Grieving Caregiver

Dear Grieving Caregiver,

Caring for someone who's aging, seriously ill, or facing a life-limiting condition can be physically and emotionally challenging.

There's a quieter, deeper feeling that often lingers beneath the surface known as *anticipatory grief*. It's the ache that shows up before a loss occurs, the sadness of watching someone change, the fear of what's ahead, the guilt of not always knowing what to do, and the silent mourning of what life used to look like. This is a valid emotional response to caregiving. You're not being dramatic or negative; you're human, grieving something that hasn't fully happened yet.

Here are a few tips to help you navigate your situation:

Recognizing your feelings as anticipatory grief can provide some relief. It helps you realize that your emotions aren't a sign of weakness—they're part of loving deeply. Creating moments of presence, rather than focusing solely on the future or what may be lost, gently shifts your attention to what's here now. A shared story, a quiet moment, or a favorite song can create meaningful connections.

Try not to be too hard on yourself; let yourself feel without judgement. There may be days when you feel angry, sad, numb, or even resentful. This doesn't mean you're failing as a caregiver; it means you're emotionally invested. Give yourself permission to feel what you feel.

Remember, you don't have to carry this alone. Reach out for support, talk to a therapist, join a caregiver support group, or explore grief resources—even before loss occurs. Some helpful resources include disease-specific support organizations like BC Cancer, the Canadian Cancer Society, and local hospice organizations. Many provide 1-1 emotional support and caregiver support group sessions. Therapists specializing in grief and caregiving counselling may also be beneficial.

"Try not to be too hard on yourself; let yourself feel without judgement... This doesn't mean you're failing as a caregiver; it means you're emotionally invested."

Finally, don't forget about yourself. Your health, rest, and emotional well-being are essential. Caring for someone else shouldn't mean losing yourself in the process. *Anticipatory grief is love, just in another form.*

You're showing up in one of the hardest, most devoted ways possible—with presence, care, and courage. — Caregiver Support Team





Quiz: What's Your Caregiving Style?



Instructions: Answer the following questions to discover your caregiving style. Keep track of your answers (A, B, C, or D) and see which letter you chose most often.

caregiving, a) Seek advic b) Trust your c) Research a	d with a challenge in you usually: te from others. thinstincts and go with your gut. and gather information. teak to clear your mind.	 How do you prefer to communicate with your care recipient? a) Face-to-face conversations. b) Through activities we enjoy together. c) Using written notes or texts. d) In a calm, quiet environment.
managing s a) Talking it c b) Engaging i c) Practicing	or go-to method for stress? Out with friends or family. In a hobby or creative outlet. In mindfulness or meditation. Itside for some fresh air.	 When planning activities for your care recipient, you tend to: a) Focus on social events to keep them engaged. b) Relaxing with reading or watching movies. c) Plan educational or stimulating activities. d) Opt for nature walks or outdoor experiences.
a) Spend tim b) Enjoy som c) Read or le	vntime, you prefer to: e with friends or family. e quiet time alone. arn something new. rough journalling or meditation.	 6 What motivates you to care for your loved one? □ a) I want them to have the best life possible. □ b) I feel a strong connection and responsibility. □ c) I believe in helping others and making a difference. □ d) I find joy and purpose in being there for them.
achievement a land a la	u celebrate small nts with your care recipient? little party or do something fun. I'm proud and share my happiness. t of their progress to look back on. n a small treat or gift.	How do you handle changes in your caregiving routine? a) I adjust quickly and find new ways to manage. b) I take time to adjust and reflect on my approach. c) I discuss it with someone I trust for support. d) I find joy and purpose in being there for them.
Mostly A's: The Social Butterfly	You enjoy connecting with others. Be • Benefits: Encourages social interacti	ing with people recharges you and brings joy to your caregiving. on, reduces feelings of loneliness, and builds a support network. ne, improve listening skills, and help your care recipient be more
Mostly B's: The Nurturer	Benefits: Strengthens emotional bor	upport, creating a warm space for the person you care for. nds, provides safety, and creates a calming atmosphere. ndaries, help the care recipient express their needs, seek support
Mostly C's: The Researcher	Benefits: Increases confidence in de	cisions, helps spot problems, and encourages learning. eal life, build emotional awareness, and stay flexible with change.
Mostly D's: The Grounded	Benefits: Reduces stress, builds resil	are, helping both you and your care recipient stay calm. ience, and improves the quality of care. er caregivers for support, improve communication with the care

recipient, and find fun activities for them.

Source: OpenAI (2025). ChatGPT. Multiple queries were used, with key sources reviewed.

Caregiver

Understanding Caregiver Guilt

Compilation of work by Maureen Grant, Vivian E. Greenberg, and Anna Burrowes

Every morning, Joan tells herself that today will be different. She won't lose her patience; she won't snap. But by noon, she's exhausted, her mom has asked the same question 12 times, and the guilt creeps in again. Sound familiar?

Guilt is an uncomfortable feeling that arises from knowing or believing you have done something wrong. It often involves feelings of culpability, particularly for imagined offenses or a sense of inadequacy. The key word here is "imagined." As caregivers, we are doing our best given our circumstances, and much of our guilt stems from our own interpretation that we are not doing well enough. It's important to recognize that these feelings may not reflect reality; we are often doing a good job, even if it feels challenging.

Guilt can be triggered instantly and create unease and tension. To address it, it's essential to recognize and acknowledge your feelings. Unrecognized guilt can weigh heavily on your spirit. Try to identify underlying emotions. For instance, you might feel resentful that a parent's illness has changed your life. Naming these feelings can provide clarity and perspective.

Now that we have a better understanding of what guilt is and how it can affect us as caregivers, let's explore some effective strategies to manage and alleviate these feelings:

Acknowledge your feelings of guilt. Unrecognized guilt eats at your soul. Often, there are deeper feelings beneath guilt. For example, say to yourself, "I hate to admit this, but I'm resentful that Dad's illness changed our lives." Putting it into words provides a new perspective.

Practice self-compassion. There's no single way a caregiver should feel. When you allow yourself to have any feeling and recognize that your emotions don't control your actions, your guilt will subside. Understanding the context opens the door for self-acceptance. You are doing your best given the situation.

Prioritize self-care. It's critical to recharge by stepping away from caregiving. Taking time for yourself isn't something to feel guilty about; it enables you to sustain caregiving long-term and maintain your health.

Make time with your care recipient meaningful. Spend quality time together to lessen feelings of guilt. You won't feel as guilty about "abandoning" Mom if you've had an enjoyable morning doing something she loves.

Reach out to others. Sharing your feelings helps normalize your experiences. Without sharing struggles, including guilt, you may feel worse. Talking with someone who understands can reduce stress and promote relaxation.

Identify your triggers. Instead of feeling guilty about outbursts, think of strategies to prevent them. Notice signs of frustration so you can step away before reacting.

Forgive yourself. Guilt often results from refusing to accept what's beyond your control. The real issue is holding onto guilt without examining the context.



Tips for Managing Caregiver Guilt

Ask Yourself:

- Who says I should feel guilty?
- Is anyone else ready to help if I can't?
- Did I really do something wrong?
- What can I learn from this situation?
- Is this regret realistic?
- Am I being too hard on myself?

Replace Negative Thoughts:

- Change "should" to "I wish I could."
- Use "and" instead of "but" in conversations.

Watch Out For:

- Always doing for others, even when tired.
- Feeling burned out or sick.
- Neglecting personal relationships.
- Not taking breaks or vacations.

Remember: You are not alone, and it's okay to take care of yourself!



Creating Your Own Relaxing Space At Home



Being a caregiver can be challenging, and finding time for yourself is often tough. We've heard from many caregivers who feel they can't leave the house because there's no one to care for their loved ones. This is why creating a personal relaxation space at home is so important. When your surroundings are chaotic, it can be difficult to quiet your mind. This cozy spot helps you unwind and regain a sense of control. You deserve a space that brings you peace and joy, and this worksheet will help you create that sanctuary.

Location

Select a quiet area in your home where you can create your relaxation space.	
Room/Specific Spot:	



Purpose

What do you want to achieve? (e.g., relaxation, mindfulness, creative activities)



Setup

Consider the following elements to enhance your relaxation space:

- Seating (e.g., cushion, chair, floor mat):

- Sound (e.g., soft music, nature sounds, silence):



Personal Touches

Reflect on any personal items that bring you joy or peace to add to your sanctuary (e.g., books, photos, blankets)



Routine

Establish a routine for using your relaxation space:



Reflection

- What helped me relax? _______

The Embrace of a Caring Circle

By Jim LaMorte, Friend Caregiver



I care about a caregiver, and I am not alone. This is the story of two friends, Art and Grace, who faced a challenging journey together. When Grace began her two-year battle with lymphoma cancer, her husband, Art, took on many household chores and became her personal nurse as her condition worsened. Art stepped up to do everything required for Grace, often at the cost of his own well-being.

Their story is likely familiar to many readers, with many caregivers navigating the emotional rollercoaster of hope, doubt, and despair. As they faced this challenge, we, their friends and family, encountered a challenge too: How to help Art and Grace cope. What did they need? What could we offer? Initially, we struggled to find the right way to help. Art later said, "Having four casseroles land in my fridge on one day, although miraculous and generous, was not all that helpful."

Our dilemma was balancing our desire to help with respecting their privacy. We hesitated to reach out. We didn't know what to do, but doing nothing felt wrong. We didn't want to say the wrong thing, offering some lighthearted comment that triggered pain or anger, but saying nothing felt wrong, too. Meanwhile, Art and Grace were also reluctant to ask for help, feeling embarrassed and guilty about imposing on others. Art was clearly heading for caregiver burnout, a term that was new to us all.

Through honest conversations, we reached an agreement:

- We, the supporters, would not take on roles that unduly impacted our lives.
- In return, Art and Grace would express their needs openly, allowing us to help according to our availability.

Trusting each other on these two points helped everyone. By great good fortune, we discovered FCBC and the resources they offered. In our first meeting, we learned that our situation was common and that there were tools that could help. FCBC explained that it's not unusual for friends to scatter when they hear of someone who's seriously ill. We also learned about the power of sharing caregiving activities in a Caring Circle.

We created a common calendar where Art could list his needs, allowing us to respond when we were available. This tool allowed us to build a community we named "Grace's Circle," which eventually included nearly 50 members. Together, we shared meal preparation, visits, yard work, and gave Art a break occasionally.

Watching a loved one suffer and being unable to relieve their pain feels like an unfamiliar level of torture. There is a persistent itch to help. With the support of FCBC and the tools they provided, we found a way to build a new community of care that worked.



Listen to our latest podcast episode on Circles of Care: "Secondary Caregivers Relieving Primary Caregivers Through Circles of Care" –

https://www.familycaregiversbc.ca/21166-2



CALL OUR FREE CAREGIVER SUPPORT LINE: 1-877-520-3267 | visit familycaregiversbc.ca



Stay Ready: Emergency Preparedness Tips for Caregivers



Natural disasters like earthquakes, floods, and wildfires can interrupt important services in British Columbia. Make sure to keep everyone safe during these emergencies by taking these steps:

- 1. Personal Support Plan: Write down the person's needs, daily routines, and preferences.
- 2. Communication Aids: Ensure communication devices are charged and easy to find.
- 3. Mobility Aids: Check that wheelchairs or walkers are in good shape and accessible.
- 4. Medication Management: Keep an updated list of medications and have enough on hand.

- **5. Emergency Contacts:** Create a list of doctors, family members, and friends to call in an emergency.
- **6. Assistive Technology:** Make sure all devices work and have extra batteries.
- 7. Evacuation Plan: Develop a clear plan for leaving home if needed, considering mobility issues.
- 8. Emergency Kit: Pack a kit with food, water, and necessary supplies for at least 72 hours.
- 9. Practice Drills: Run practice drills to ensure everyone knows what to do.

Explore Our Resources

Peace of Mind: A Caregiver's **Guide to Contingency Planning:** https://www.familycaregiversbc. ca/archives/3d-flip-book/peaceof-mind-a-caregivers-guide-tocontingency-planning





Tip: PreparedBC offers downloadable guides to help you prepare for emergencies. Learn more: https:// www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-management/ preparedbc/guides-and-resources#core

Join a Community Caregiver Support Group

Family Caregivers of BC offers 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 Burnaby Campbell River Chilliwack Comox Valley Coquitlam Cowichan Valley Cranbrook Delta

Gabriola Island East Kootenay West Kootenay Kelowna Keremeos Lake Country Langley Maple Ridge Mayne Island

Nanaimo North Vancouver Oliver Pender Island Penticton Port Alberni Port Coquitlam Princeton

Richmond Salt Spring Island Sidney **Smithers** Summerland Surrey Vancouver

Victoria

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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 hr)

HSC British Columbia Resource Center

604-822-7195

MS Society of Canada (B.C.)

1-800-268-7582

Parkinson Society B.C.

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

B.C. 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

B.C. Ministry of Health

www.gov.bc.ca/health

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

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

B.C. Palliative Care Benefits

www.health.gov.bc.ca/

BC Seniors Guide

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

English, Chinese, French, Punjabi

Crisis Centre BC

www.crisiscentre.bc.ca/get-help/ 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

First Nations Health Authority

www.fnha.ca Toll-free: 1-866-913-0033

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 | 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, Mon - Fri)

www.seniorsfirstbc.ca

UBC Pharmacists Clinic

www.pharmsci.ubc.ca/pharmacists-clinic

We Can Help Right Now!



B.C. Caregiver Support Line 1-877-520-3267 Monday to Friday 8:30 am to 4:00 pm







info@familycaregiversbc.ca



www.familycaregiversbc.ca

Switch to our e-Newsletter!

If you'd like to stop receiving a paper copy, please let us know at:

info@familycaregiversbc.ca

Family Caregivers Society of BC is a registered charitable organization dedicated 100% to supporting caregivers. With gratitude and respect, we acknowledge that we operate on traditional, ancestral and unceded territories of Indigenous peoples around the province.

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