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Caring for caregivers



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Approximately one in four Canadians aged 15 and older (almost 8 million people) provided care to a family member or friend with a long-term health condition, a physical or mental disability, or problems related to aging according to Statistics Canada. In fact, the number of caregivers will continue to increase as the population ages.

Caregivers are usually unpaid. Many times, their role as caregiver is due to circumstances beyond their control. And most were likely not formally trained for this important yet often underappreciated role. Working closely with caregivers in my line of work assisting families with life transitions, I frequently hear phrases such as, “I just need a break”, “I’m overwhelmed”, “Now I’m the one getting

sick”, and “I’m concerned about finances” to name a few. I also hear the love and compassion that comes with the role of being a caregiver.

I was fortunate to have been a panelist on a recent national webinar hosted by Lumino Health, a division of Sunlife. The topic was about improving the lives of caregivers. Here are a few takeaways from the webinar that I would like to share:

Self care

Caregiving can be isolating. A common mistake is taking on too much. Sometimes caregivers end up having their own health issues. Self care is crucial. It will reduce your stress levels and allow you to be more efficient in your caregiving tasks. Decision making will also be made a little easier when you are of sound mind. Don’t be afraid to ask for help. Focus on eating well, getting enough sleep, staying physically active and socially connected. Many

caregivers also find relief through mind-body exercises such as meditation, yoga and deep breathing techniques.

Tap into existing resources

Start with your local CLSC and request an evaluation. You will need to advocate for your loved one as it may take some time. However, our healthcare system can provide basic caregiving and nursing services. There can also be financial support through government tax credits and company group insurance plans.

Caregiver support groups — both online or physical groups — can be very helpful. Finally, try to delegate some tasks to family and friends.

Expect the unexpected

Be organized. Take notes during doctor’s appointments. Communicate schedules with siblings and your support network. However, things are not always going to go as planned no matter how

organized you are. There could be cancelled appointments, a hospitalization, a caregiver not showing up, or you loved one simply having a bad day and not wanting anything to do with your help. You must roll with the punches. It is not easy. But with the right attitude, proper approach and understanding that things could change on the fly, your ability to adapt and provide proper care will improve dramatically.

Caregivers are our unsung heroes. If you know of someone in a caregiving role, make it a point to reach out to them. Offer to help if you can. Very often, just the gesture of reaching out and acknowledging their efforts can make a world of difference.

Matt Del Vecchio is a Certified Professional Consultant on Aging and founder of Lianas Senior Transition Support helping families with their life transitions. He is also the co-host of “Life Unrehearsed” on CJAD800. For more, visit mdevecchio@lianasservices.com

JDRF Canada’s ‘Dear Type 1’ campaign marks National Diabetes Awareness Month

JDRF Canada, the leading organization funding type 1 diabetes (T1D) research, is marking National Diabetes Awareness Month (NDAM) by honouring the power and resilience of the T1D community with the “Dear Type 1” campaign.

During November, JDRF is raising awareness about type 1 diabetes by encouraging Canadians impacted to share their stories by writing a letter to the disease and posting it on social media using the hashtag #DearType1 or online at <https://www.jdrf.ca/deartype1/>.

“As an organization, we want to celebrate the collective strength of the type 1 diabetes community and have people share their experiences with this often-misunderstood disease,” says Dave Prowten, President and CEO of JDRF Canada. “Dear type 1 is a powerful campaign that very personally and emotionally encourages people to share the dramatic impact this disease has on all of those affected and the continued need for research funding.

As we continue to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic, we cannot let research and support for those living with type 1 diabetes slow down.”

November is National Diabetes Awareness Month, which is celebrated across the world as a month to educate and raise awareness about the disease. On November 14, millions of people around the world marked United Nations (UN) World Diabetes Day, honouring the birthday of Dr. Frederick G. Banting – the Canadian co-discoverer of insulin – as part of an international campaign to raise public awareness about this chronic disease. “On the cusp of the 100th anniversary of the discovery of insulin in Canada, we need to unite and work towards creating a world without type 1 diabetes,” adds Prowten.

For more information about JDRF’s Dear Type 1 campaign, visit www.jdrf.ca/deartype1 — JDRF Canada, www.jdrf.ca

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