

Caregiver Mental Health During COVID-19



In British Columbia, we are actively working to contain the COVID-19 pandemic. One strategy being employed is physical distancing or avoiding interaction with others. While this strategy is necessary, it can contribute to feelings of isolation and affect a person's mental health. This is true for caregivers and the people they support.

For many caregivers, their routines have been dramatically changed. Supports put in place to assist caregivers have been suspended. For example, caregivers may no longer be able to access respite or adult day programs. This along with the magnitude of the pandemic can take a toll on a caregiver's mental health.

It is important to take time to check in with yourself to see where you are at mentally and emotionally, take time to process the situation and take time for your mental health.

Tips for Ensuring Good Mental Health for Caregivers:

1. Seek information from trusted sources

There is a lot of information being shared. If watching, reading, or listening to the news is causing anxiety and distress, reduce your exposure and seek updates from trusted sources once or twice a day.

2. Find opportunities to share positive stories

Acknowledge those in your circle of care. Share positive stories of people who have recovered from COVID-19 or are managing well during periods of physical distancing. Acknowledge health care providers and thank them for their commitment at this difficult time. These hopeful messages can be meaningful to our mental health to remind us of the positive.

3. Prepare your backup plan

Prepare a backup plan should you become ill or need to self-quarantine. Having a plan may help relieve some of the stress. Expand your circle of support and ask trusted members of your family or friends if they can step in to help if needed. Document the types of care you provide i.e. medication, feeding etc. so someone can easily reference and provide the care needed. Keep a list of all doctors and other healthcare providers in one place. Ensure any medical records, healthcare journey binders or other documentation is easily accessible so members of your circle of care/support know where to find them.

4. Keep a regular routine as much as possible

As much as possible, keep a regular routine. Develop strategies for adapting your routine during periods of physical distancing or self-isolation. There are many resources available online for shopping, communication, exercise etc. to help adapt your routine. Keep regular contact with the person you care for, even if you can't visit in person.

5. Stay connected and socially active

Use technology to help you stay connected i.e. email, social media, video conference (Facetime, Skype, Zoom etc.) and telephone. If you are caring for someone in a long-term or other healthcare facility, check to see what technology they have available. With changes to visitation guidelines, many homes are adding additional ways for residents and families to connect.

6. Practice self-care on a regular basis

Self-care refers to the activities and practices that we deliberately choose to engage in on a regular basis to maintain and enhance our health and well-being. For tips on practicing self-care and mental wellness visit our website to download your free copy of the Caregivers Self-Care Workbook.
<https://www.caregiversnetworkek.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/255/2020/02/selfcarebookletwebdownload.pdf>



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