



# Compassionate caring

Caring for someone can be stressful, tiring, and at the same time rewarding. Caregivers may feel alone and that they have a big responsibility, even if surrounded by care and support.

## Things to know

- People who are ill experience many emotions, and may say things they would not normally say. Don't take this personally. Behaviours may be caused by feeling ill, symptoms, side effects of medication, or anger or sadness over the situation.
- Caregivers are often asked to help with personal care, medications, skin care, bandage wounds and many other caregiving tasks. You may not feel comfortable or familiar with these responsibilities.
- Families should be supported in their care choices, whether these are traditional healing methods, western practices, or both.
- There are many sources of help:
  - family and friends, community members and leaders
  - Elders, traditional knowledge keepers, priests, pastors
  - health care providers such as a community health nurse, physician, home care, family support worker, social worker, mental health therapist, patient navigator or liaison
  - online resources like Canadian Virtual Hospice, books and pamphlets, telephone supports, hospice options
- You may have promised to care for someone at home. It can be upsetting if the person needs to be admitted to a care facility, or can't be discharged from hospital.

*“Working hand-in-hand is so important, the physical and spirit helping, easing the mind, the emotion, and resurrecting the mental state.”*

**Elder Eugene Harry**  
Cowichan Tribes, British Columbia

## Things to do

- Assure the person he or she is not a burden.
- Write down the person's wishes. Sometimes it takes time for someone to open up and share.
- Have a circle to talk about how everyone is feeling and ways to relieve stress.
- Communicate openly and honestly with health care providers. Clarifying concerns around symptoms, treatment, care, and patient rights can ease family members' feelings of fear, guilt or anger.
- Ask for instructions on providing care and chances to practise.
- If the person must be cared for in a health care facility, advocate for him or her. Support the care that is provided there.
- Look after yourself.
  - Take time to eat and sleep.
  - Connect with nature.
  - Get fresh air and exercise.
  - Visit a friend.
  - Seek spiritual comfort.
  - Meditate.
  - Participate in ceremonies.
  - Journal, draw, paint, sing, dance.
- Honour silence. Silence can have a calming effect and make a positive difference. Listen to what is being said, as well as what is not being said.

## Helpful resource

Caregiving Videos – Canadian Virtual Hospice has step-by-step instructions of common caregiver tasks – [www.VirtualHospice.ca/CaregivingVideos](http://www.VirtualHospice.ca/CaregivingVideos)



THE FOUR SEASONS BY JASON GULLO MULLINS

*To see the Indigenous Voices video series and to learn more about living with serious illness and grief, go to [LivingMyCulture.ca](http://LivingMyCulture.ca)*

### Also available:

- What is palliative care?
- Compassionate caring
- Care at home and away
- Helping you feel better
- What to expect
- Honouring wishes
- Making memories
- Grief and letting go



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