

Caring Connections Chronicle

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Where
flowers
bloom,
so
does
hope



Inspiration for Spring / A Spring Awakening



Around the world, and especially here in Northwestern Ontario, people look forward to the spring season: a time of growth, renewal, and emergence into the light after a cold, dark winter.

While some will challenge themselves to focus on spring cleaning during the coming months (yuck!), we instead would like to remind all caregivers to embrace the beauty and simplicity of springtime and take the time to enjoy the change in seasons.

Here are some common signs of spring to look for that can bring us hope and a sense of peace:

- The budding of the trees and hints of early flowers starting to push up from the soil.
- Bright colours – Easter eggs, spring dresses, blue skies, and every shade of green imaginable!
- The feeling of the breeze on your face when it's warm enough to roll down your car window, or finally turn the furnace off and open a window to the fresh air.
- The singing (or honking) of birds as they return from their winters in the south.
- The surprise appearance of the first butterfly, bumblebee, or ladybug in your yard.
- Watching out your window as neighbours hang their clothes out to dry, and children ride their bikes up and down the street.

When chatting with your loved ones, or reconnecting with friends after a winter's hibernation, why not ask them what their favourite signs of spring are – it's a great way to encourage some positive vibes and remind us that we have things to look forward to!

Submitted by: Hilary Mettam

The Greater Good Science Centre at Berkeley publishes a monthly Happiness Calendar, which is full of tips and advice on living a life of connection, compassion, and well-being. At the beginning of the month, click here to download your copy!

[Click here to view the Happiness Calendar](#)

It's time to spring clean your medicine cabinet!!

It's that time of year again — the weather is slowly warming up and the days are getting longer! Despite what the temperature outside may indicate, spring has officially arrived. And with the new season comes that time-honored ritual—spring cleaning.



Are you including your medicine cabinet as part of your spring cleaning? If not, we suggest you do! Expired and unused medications are easy to stockpile but they can be unsafe to the rest of our families as well as the environment.

Easy steps to clean out your cabinet:



First things first, separate what medication you use and what medication you don't. It isn't necessary to keep medication you are not currently taking. If your doctor has changed your medications and you have leftovers, or if you had pain pills from that one time you hurt your back, clean those out!

Determine expiry dates:

This can be a bit tricky determining the expiry dates on medications. Here are some helpful tips:

- ◇ Expiry dates for creams can be found at the end of the tube where it is sealed.
- ◇ Most medications that come in blister packages will have an expiry date on the box and on the blister card.
- ◇ If you can't find the expiry date anywhere, it is better to safely dispose of the medication than it is to hang onto it.
- ◇ For prescriptions, we suggest the 1-year rule (if it's been a year since you filled, get rid of it!)
- ◇ It is also a good idea to dispose of unmarked containers, if it is not in its original packaging it's best to let it go.
- ◇ Treat all natural, vitamin, or over the counter medications in the same manner as prescription medications.
- ◇ If you are unsure of any medication, take it to your pharmacist to help you out with it.

Drop off expired medication:

And now that all of that is done what do we do with everything we cleaned out?

Take it to your local pharmacy and they will safely dispose of all medications. Flushing medication down the toilet or putting them in the garbage is unsafe and harmful to the environment. Before you bring them, make sure all patient identifying labels and information is taken off. Keep all liquids and powders in their original packing to avoid a mess.

For needles and diabetic supplies, please make sure they are put in a SHARPS container and not mixed with other medications.

Is it time to relocate your medicine cabinet:

Where are you storing all these medications? Medicine should be stored in a cool dry place. So, the medicine cabinet in your bathroom is not the best choice. The temperature and humidity changes are not good for your medication and can change the potency of it. We might suggest a drawer in your dresser.

If you are caring for a family member:

Ask their pharmacist for their medication list. This way you can see what medication they are currently taking and what they should have on hand. If there are several bottles of the same medication, do not combine them! Keep the most recently filled one and discard the others. If there are any changes to their medication, let their pharmacist know so they can update their list.

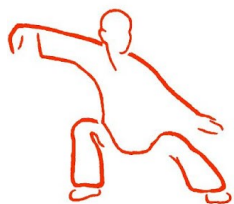
Last spring-cleaning step: Go for a medication review:

Take your medicine cabinet to your pharmacist. Phone ahead and make an appointment. They will sit down with you for a comprehensive medication review to ensure the medication list is up to date. A medication review gives you the opportunity to talk about your health and medication and ensures you are getting the best care possible.

Courtesy of: Medicine Shop Pharmacy



3 Easy Tai Chi Videos for Seniors Prevent Falls, Improve Balance and Strength



<https://dailycaring.com/3-easy-tai-chi-videos-for-seniors-prevent-falls-improve-balance-and-strength-video/>

Tai Chi is a Chinese martial art which has been practiced for generations. It is a slow and gentle exercise that is suitable for older adults, even if they are managing chronic conditions. It offers the benefits of flexibility, muscle strengthening, and endurance training. Tai Chi can improve the health of seniors without worsening existing impairments.

When designed for this age group, the movements are slow, with footwork choreographed by a leader. Participants learn to breathe correctly, focusing on how they intake and release air while moving.

Concentrating on each movement helps the mind to relax and relieves stress. The person is often calmer and has more energy after a session. Deep breathing and learning to focus helps improve balance, which can help prevent falls and injuries.

A new tool for finding low - and modest-income benefits

Prosper Canada has recently launched the [Benefits wayfinder](https://benefitswayfinder.org/), a free, simple, easy to use, plain language tool in English and French that helps people living with low and modest incomes find and track benefits they could receive. The information and resources provided are from federal, provincial, and territorial governments, updated on an ongoing basis as new information becomes available.

<https://benefitswayfinder.org/>

Introduction video to the benefits wayfinder and how to use the website:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3L3y4d35auo>

A Dementia Strategy for CANADA

Wondering what Canada is doing to support the increasing rates of individuals living with a form of dementia? On June 17th, 2019 the Government of Canada released “A Dementia Strategy: Together We Aspire” – Canada’s first-ever national dementia strategy!

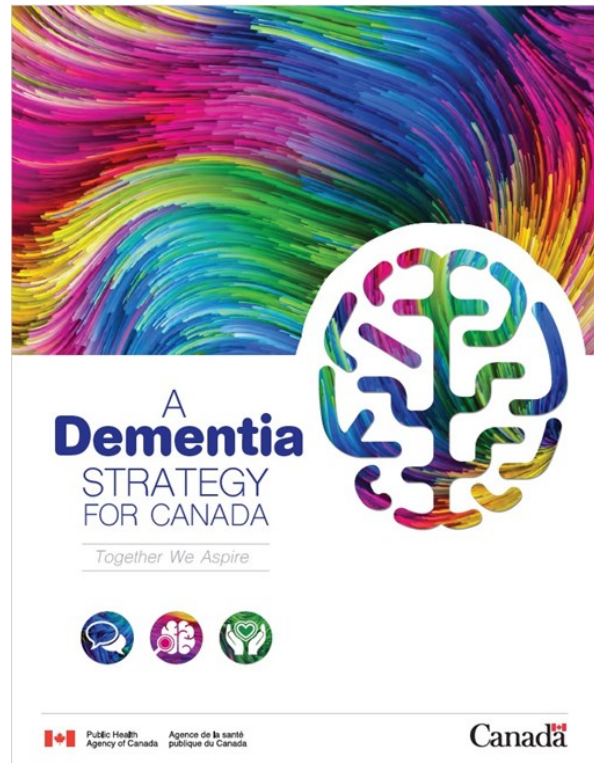
The strategy will address the impact and cost of dementia through three key objectives:

1. Prevent dementia
2. Advance therapies to find a cure
3. Improve the quality of life of people living with dementia and caregivers

Only together can we achieve the dementia objectives! This involves everyone including family/ friend caregivers, people living with dementia, advocacy groups, academia, researchers, care providers and provincial and federal government.

Check out the full strategy at the link below to read more about how these objectives will be supported:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/diseases-conditions/dementia-strategy.html#s2>



The Art of Listening



Submitted by: Susan Bithrey

Caregivers need to be good listeners. Sometimes the people we care about, and especially those we care for, just need to talk. The reasons that they need us to listen and hear them can be all over the map: they may be sad, worried, angry, confused, depressed, happy, or hopeful, and the thing they want to talk about may or may not have anything to do with us. They just need a place to put their emotions, share their story, and with any luck, figure something out.

There's an art to listening. It's a skill that needs to be honed, and we're perhaps not all as good at it as we may think we are. It's fairly simple to have a conversation with someone when both parties are calm, but listening skills can be severely tested when emotions on either side are out of control, and we can skid into a confrontation before we know it.

We can become better listeners by keeping a few simple rules top of mind:

Pay attention. If we're busy inside our own heads thinking about what we're going to say back, forming rebuttals, hatching solutions and suggestions, we're not fully hearing what the speaker is saying. Concentrate on the speaker's message and body language, and try your best to filter out distractions that may be going on around you.

Show your interest with appropriate body language and posture, and by nodding, or saying "Yes" or "Uh huh".

Give feedback by using short statements such as:

" So what you're saying is ...";

" If I'm understanding you ..."

and then briefly paraphrasing what you've heard.

Don't interrupt. Give the speaker the time and space they need to say what they want to say.

Be curious, but don't pry. Ask questions that might help the speaker clarify points and move the conversation forward in a positive way.

Acknowledge how they're feeling, without judging, taking sides, or further agitating a highly charged emotional state.

For example, "I can see that you're really angry about this ... " .

Resist the impulse to suggest solutions or give unsolicited advice. It's rarely welcome, and even more rarely is it taken.

And finally, remember that being a good listener takes practice, practice and more practice. For a more in-depth treatment of the topic, may we recommend:

LISTEN: How to Find the Words for Tender Conversations. Kathryn Mannix.

William Collins Publisher, 2021.

This is a book which offers quiet wisdom and expertise, as well as stories, to help us hone our listening and conversation skills.

Need some good news in your day?



Keeping up with world news is important but can be overwhelming ... especially during difficult times. Check out the Good News Network at the link below for a dose of positivity!

<https://www.goodnewsnetwork.org/>

For further information regarding the Caregiver Support Committee call 1-833-416-2273.

For information on programs and services available to Caregivers in Ontario call the 24/7 Caregiver Helpline at 1-833-416-2273

This Caring Connections Chronicle is edited by:

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