

Caring Conversations with Loved Ones

By Maggie Roach-Ganaway, Caregiver Support Coordinator, Cape Breton Region

It is important that as a caregiver you are informed and ready to deal with life as it happens, whether it is good or bad. Here are seven things that you may want to discuss with your loved one so there are fewer surprises.

How are they doing now? Is the person you care for already facing challenges or health problems that you may not be aware of? Do you have a clear and realistic view of their daily life? Are there things that can be done to make their life easier?

Crisis Planning. We all need a plan no matter what our age. If there is a crisis, how will your care recipient get help? Do you have contact information for relatives, neighbours, friends, doctors, lawyers, and local service providers? Consider creating a telephone list in case you need to make calls on their behalf.

Advance Care Planning. Everyone should have an up-to-date Will, an Enduring Power of Attorney (for financial issues), and a Personal Directive (for end of life care). Be sure that both you and your loved one have these documents and that you know where they are located.

What options are available? Most people would prefer to stay in their own home, but that may not always be possible. Could the house be made more accessible to allow them to stay, like a first floor bedroom/bathroom, or ramps, etc.? If they can't stay in their own home, where could they go? What matters most to them? The answers may surprise you.

What costs will be involved? Everyone should be aware of the cost associated with care, whether it is home care or in a long-term care (LTC) or assisted living facility. You may want to discuss LTC insurance and family retirement planning and protection.

The Healthcare System. It may be good to emphasize to your loved one the importance of having just one doctor to oversee their care.

Get to know their physician and stay in touch with them. Know what health insurance policies are in place and how to access them.

End of Life. It's a hard fact of life that many people end up confused and afraid because family members weren't prepared to make the tough choices. The best way to avoid this is to have an in-depth family discussion in advance. Talk about their fears, hopes and how they want decisions handled. Then prepare yourself to follow those wishes.

These conversations can go in all sorts of directions, but it is important to have them in the first place to make life a little easier for both of you. Caregivers Nova Scotia can help you with these conversations. We have many resources available as well as the ability to talk with you in advance so you will know how to approach them. We are here to help!



211 is a Nova Scotia based non-profit that offers navigation services for anyone

looking for help in the area of human, social or community services. Trained navigators are on duty 24/7/365 to help people get information about and find services offered by government and the not-for-profit sector, including home care, income support, counselling and much more. 211 has information on more than 5,000 services and programs across Nova Scotia. Whether a need arises from a caregiver or a person receiving care, the thoughtful, empathetic team at 211 is always there to help. Accessible by phone (2-1-1), email (help@ns.211.ca), or for those preferring self-service, there is a searchable website (www.ns.211.ca).