

# Caregiver Winter Wellness

By Catherine Parent, Caregiver Support Coordinator, Eastern HRM



As the cooler temperatures arrive and the winter season approaches, now may be the perfect time to take a moment to pause and ponder. A reflection on wellness for the winter months, let's say. Let's get even more specific and take a look at caregiver winter wellness, starting with the basics.

The health and wellness of individuals is frequently discussed, even more so as we continue through the ongoing pandemic. Wellness is finding a healthy balance of moments and activities that lead to a fuller, more satisfying life. Wellness can add quality years to our lives. There are seven

main dimensions of wellness which include physical, emotional, intellectual, social, spiritual, environmental, and occupational. The question is... how do we (specifically caregivers) maintain wellness throughout the winter months? As a caregiver, free time is frequently in short supply. One idea is to designate time weekly, solely for a self-care activity or two. Being good to yourself can enhance the kindness and compassion that you have for others. Many caregivers are experts at multitasking. When thinking about all the dimensions of wellness, aim for a balance that works best for you. The winter season can increase isolation, anxiety, stress and loneliness, while decreasing socialization. Therefore, it is even more important to focus on finding a wellness balance.



Consider the analogy of food preservation. Many folks preserve food as a means of food security wellness through the winter. Food is preserved in mason jars and placed in a pantry for current and future use. If we were to take this practice and substitute each mason jar's content with a dimension of wellness, are we refilling and replenishing our mason jars as required? Especially as a caregiver?

Food for thought: as a caregiver, are you providing yourself with mental health and wellness self-check in points? How are you doing? What can you incorporate or delete to maintain good mental health through the winter months? What can you do to decrease the stresses and minimize the snowball effect within your role of caregiving? What are you doing to care for yourself? Are you gifting yourself time to replenish your well-being? Are you aware that socialization could add to your caregiver support network?

The following is a list of activities that can positively influence caregiver winter wellness. Incorporating a few of these activities may help winter fly by.

- Form a "Covid Pod" of friends for coffee time.
- Attend a monthly Caregiver Peer Support Group.
- Create a "Grateful" word jar...aiming at a minimum of 5 words per week.
- Participate in a neighbourhood holiday carol sing event.
- Participate in an exercise program (online, in-person, or virtually).
- Engage in a winter walk-about and be present in nature (park, trail, or mall).
- Attend a caregiver workshop... It's a great place to connect with others!
- Declutter a small space within your home. Letting go of things opens up spaces within yourself and your environment.
- Have a movie night. Set the stage with cozy blankets, snacks, and friends.
- Make an inspirational collection of items or phrases, and maybe gift this forward
- Sign up for a class; a cooking, craft, or spiritual event.
- Participate in a webinar of interest.
- Attend a winter field trip, event, or outing. Let someone else do the driving and spark up a conversation and stimulate your mind!
- Volunteer and share one of your skills with another caregiver you know or a neighbour. A buddy system can be beneficial.
- Nourish your soul by actively incorporating mini-respite moments for 20 minutes per day; all at once or spread out throughout the day, either way works well!

For additional resources for health and wellness, many programs and services are offered through community networks and organizations such as Community Links (<https://nscommunitylinks.ca>), Community Health Teams ([www.nshealth.ca](http://www.nshealth.ca)), Community Health Boards ([www.communityhealthboards.ns.ca](http://www.communityhealthboards.ns.ca)), and Well-Being and Resource Hubs ([https://www.facebook.com/WellbeingHUBs/?ref=py\\_c](https://www.facebook.com/WellbeingHUBs/?ref=py_c)) (<https://novascotia.cmha.ca>) throughout the province.



On a final note when considering caregiver winter wellness, remember to check and restock your home and vehicle

emergency kits and monitor weather conditions.

Have a happy and safe start to your winter wellness!

Some information in this article was adapted from [https://www.comforcare.ca/blog/6-Socially-Distanced-Winter-Activities-for-Seniors\\_AE159.html](https://www.comforcare.ca/blog/6-Socially-Distanced-Winter-Activities-for-Seniors_AE159.html)