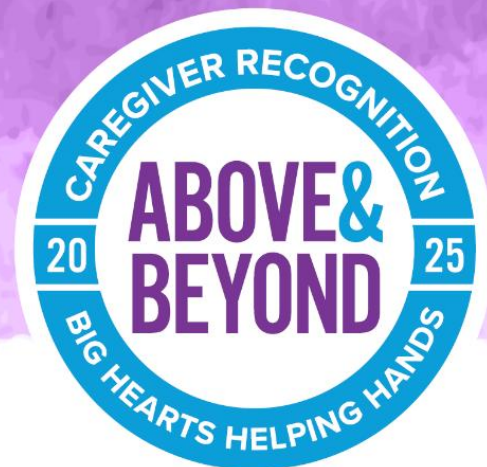




Above and Beyond Caregiver Recognition Program Caregiver Learnings

To coincide with National Caregiver Day, Ontario Health atHome created the **Above and Beyond Caregiver Recognition Program** to recognize, celebrate and support caregivers who make it possible for people to live their lives in their communities.

As the Program developed, caregivers shared how powerful it is to learn from one another –hearing what others have learned and what’s been most helpful to them. That is why collecting and sharing caregiver resources and peer insights is a core part of the Program -- to support and inspire caregivers along the way.

Ontario Health atHome has compiled the following learnings from recognized caregivers -- various strategies, suggestions, resources and words of encouragement you may find helpful in your own caregiver journey. Please note that this information is provided for informational purposes only.



Caregiver Wellness

Your Social Circle

- Reach out to family and friends for emotional support, practical help, or a listening ear.
- Laughter can be the best medicine. Watch a funny show, sign up for something humorous like a ‘joke a day’ email list or laughter yoga.
- Join a support, meditation, or community group. You can share experiences with others who understand, learn from those in similar situations, cultivate cherished friendships and you may no longer feel isolated, alone or misunderstood.

Importance of Self-Care

- If you find it difficult to make time for yourself, try scheduling “me time” in your calendar. Start with something you enjoy like reading, exercise, meditation, colouring, video games or watching a show.
- When able, take screen breaks, find a quiet space outside to meditate, walk, go to the library, or somewhere that you will enjoy.



Technology Supports

- Try an intercom within your home or assisted living facility. The person you are caring for can call while in another room or location without pressing anything.
- For those who need it, hands-free devices help with turning television / lights / radio on and off.
- Video camera with motion sensors can help monitor your loved one’s well-being, especially those who are prone to falls. This can help alleviate stress when you are not there and help monitor your loved one’s activities.
- A smartwatch can monitor health/falls/movement /location, specifically for those not living with you or who may be at risk of wandering.

- Self-recorded story books can record your own audio messages so your loved one can hear your voice.
- A storybook projector is great for those unable to hold or concentrate on a book.



Caregiver Relief

- When friends and family ask how they can support a caregiver, match with their interests. For example, if they like shopping, ask them to pick up some groceries for you or if someone likes to cook, suggest they provide meals.
- If someone asks what they can do to help, suggest light housecleaning like washing the dishes or vacuuming.
- Food delivery services or meal trains are practical suggestions. They can also cook, serve, and clean up dinner. It's helpful to have dinner made but socialization makes a great impact too.
- Time is very important. If family and friends can spend time with your loved one, it opens up opportunity for you to run errands or adds another warm connection.



General Tips

Coordinating with Family and Friends

- Provide a notebook for family and visitors to share what they've noticed about your loved one.
- Share a visiting schedule to encourage family and friends to come at different times, spread out visits or help with driving to doctor appointments.
- Track any significant events and changes in a spreadsheet so you can share them with the care team or doctor.

Day Programs

- [Adult day programs](#) can help provide respite. You can find them through your Ontario Health atHome care coordinator or call 211 for programs in your area.

Learnings

- Educate yourself on your loved one's illness. You can ask medical professionals for resources, connect with community organizations, or join a support group to help navigate change.
- Depending on your loved one's illness, learn about options and how the situation may progress. This can help with advance preparation and make it easier to plan for what comes next.



Inspirational Quotes from Caregiver Peers

- "It's ok to have hard days and give yourself grace. Tomorrow is a new day."
- "Accept the new situation you're in. Don't spend too much time mourning your old one, because today is as good as it will get. Find joy in the small things."
- "Don't be afraid to build boundaries for your own mental health, but to also leave yourself open to accept help when its offered."
- "Know that you are not alone! Knowledge is power!"
- "Let yourself FEEL when you need to."
- "Asking for help doesn't mean you're weak. It means you noticed your limit before burnout."

- “It’s important to remember to take care of yourself because if we’re not good, the person we’re caring for would have a really hard time.”
- “I wish I had set boundaries early on and asked for help sooner.”
- “Caregiving is a process. It isn't perfect and you just do the best you can at the time.”
- “What I have learned in my 33 years of caregiving is as follows and these are the very essence of caregiving. 1. Caregiving with pure love; 2. Making sacrifices; 3. Imagine yourself being in your loved one’s shoes; 4. Be very much aware of the safety of the person you are caring for; 5. Use available technology to make today easier for you and your loved one.”