



Finding Sanctuary – Caregiving and Self Care Programs

Intended Audience

For care partners, spouses, families and friends who are providing primary care to a loved one with cancer.

Program Description

Finding Sanctuary uses group discussion to address the experience of being a care partner. Because of the intimate nature of attending to a person who is ill, we are drawn deeper into the relationship, leading us into new territory. This is often experienced as fatigue (because it is hard work) and can lead to burn-out if we do not recognize our own needs in the process. Finding Sanctuary is an opportunity to acknowledge our experience of care-partnering and to develop strategies for balancing our lives so we factor ourselves and our needs into the caring relationship.

Benefits and Impact

Members experience an open, non-judgemental and inviting atmosphere in which to discuss the benefits and challenges of care-partnering. With as much candor as they choose, they are invited to exchange experiences and strategies in order to adjust to new roles and learn the importance of self care. Benefits include camaraderie, new energy and a renewed sense of well-being.

What to Expect at a Session

The facilitator begins by presenting material on a theme chosen as a guide for conversation. As the evenings unfold, members are invited to direct the conversation to other pertinent topics. The facilitator's role is to offer insight and guidance, and to honour all contributions. Members are encouraged to participate as much or as little as they wish.

Participant Comments

"I have learned beneficial self care practices. In order to be a good caregiver, I must also care for myself."

"This program helped me tune into myself and give myself a much needed break!"

What the Research Says:

In 2012, Statistics Canada reported that cancer was the second-most common condition necessitating a caregiver(s). Cancer was the top reason for spousal caregiving, and the majority of all caregivers provided care for their parents. In a qualitative study conducted by Richardson et al., 73 family caregivers of head and neck cancer patients indicated common needs included help for practical tasks, help in understanding their loved one's treatment plans, the need to experience empathy from healthcare professionals, and more information about how to access support materials and support groups. The majority of caregivers expressed a preference for face-to-face meetings to allow for greater empathy, understanding, and improved ease in relationship-building. Caregivers who participated in group sessions reported benefits such as improved coping skills, experiencing compassion, learning practical information, and having the opportunity to express their emotions and fears with others who were going through similar experiences. (Statistics Canada. Government of Canada. Portrait of Caregivers, 2012: Highlights. Obtained from: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-652-x/2013001/hl-fs-eng.htm>). (Richardson AE, Morton R., Broadbent E. (2015). Psychological support needs of patients with head and neck cancer and their caregivers: A qualitative study, *Psychology & Health*, 30(11): 1288-1305).

Program Frequency:

2 hours per month
3 to 4 programs per session
Winter, spring/summer, fall

Optimum Class Size: 12

Related Programs:

For Caregivers Only
Thursdays with Bob
Chaplain in Residence