Support volunteer bulletin

Spring 2024

Peer-to-peer connection: Recap

Alzheimer's Society of BC hosted our fourth Peer-to-peer connection in March.

Peer-to-peer connection is one of the ongoing training and engagement opportunities available to support group facilitator volunteers. These meetings provide an opportunity for facilitators from across the province to come together virtually to share, learn and engage in a safe and supportive environment.

Volunteers can share specific concerns that have arisen in their support groups as well as tools, strategies and activities that have been a success.

During each meeting we also demonstrate and practice self-care techniques, like mindfulness exercises and closing rituals, which volunteers can use personally or introduce to their support group members.

In March, we had 17 volunteers attend from every region across the province. Some volunteers had joined our organization recently, some were rejoining after a break and some had been volunteering with our Society for over 10 years!

Some of the topics and themes that came up included how to facilitate discussions about sensitive topics such as medication, navigating the health-care system and driving.

We've included some helpful resources on these topics in this issue. Keep reading to learn more!

The next Peer-to-peer connection meeting will be held on Wednesday, May 29 3:30 to 5 p.m. via Zoom.

To register, email the Provincial Coordinator (Volunteer Engagement), Amy Gill at agill@alzheimerbc.org.

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Resources: Medication and self-advocacy

Managing conversations about medications

Support groups are a space for members to share their experiences, which may include personal experiences with medications or treatments.

We encourage members to avoid presenting their experiences as medical advice. As a facilitator, you can assess if it is time to intervene in the discussion either by shifting the conversation to another topic or directing support group members to a resource about medication.

It might also be helpful to reshare our **ground rules for discussion** at each meeting.

More info: Medications approved for Alzheimer's disease in Canada

Handout: Alzheimer's disease treatment options

Sensitive topics: A guide for facilitators and presenters

Navigating the health-care system through self-advocacy

Navigating the health-care system can be difficult for caregivers and those living with dementia. Getting the proper care also often requires self-advocacy. Self-advocacy is what we do to improve a situation for ourselves, a family member or another individual.

During a support group, it can be helpful to ask other members what techniques they have found to be helpful when navigating the health-care system. Other support group members' experiences might help those experiencing some challenges think of alternate options.

More info: self-advocacy strategies

Equip yourself: Knowledge and skills to help get the support you need

* **Previously recorded**
* **Register for live session Wednesday, May 22 2024**

What does advocacy mean to you? (p. 4 *Fall 2023 Support Volunteer Bulletin*)

Resources: Self-advocacy and driving

If you are finding that someone in your group is needing one-to-one support, you can refer them to the First Link® Dementia Helpline or connect them with a staff member.

English: 1-800-936-6033
(Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. to 8 p.m.)
Cantonese and Mandarin: 1-833-674-5007
(Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.)
Punjabi, Hindi and Urdu: 1-833-674-5003
(Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.)

Driving

You can share these resources with support group members looking for more information about driving, or use them to learn more about this topic for yourself.

Conversations about dementia and driving guide

This sheet provides information on things to consider when having conversations about driving cessation.

Driving & dementia road map

This resource helps users understand how dementia can impact driving; identify when it becomes unsafe for people living with dementia to drive; and adjusting to life without driving.

Driving and dementia: Strategies for Caregivers

An online video with strategies for caregivers from the Alzheimer Society of B.C.

Dementia and driving resource centre

Realistic video scenarios to help families start the conversation about driving.

Older drivers in Canada and their families

A website providing useful tips on safe driving and risk-reducing strategies.

Mindfulness activity: Five senses

This is a quick and relatively easy activity to bring you to a mindful state. If you only have a minute or two, the five senses exercise can help you or your support group members bring awareness to the current moment.

Notice five things you can see.

Note the visual aspects about these things: what colour is it? Is it dull or bright? Is it shiny or reflective?

Notice four things you can feel.

You can feel the texture of your clothes, your hair, or notice the feeling of your hands resting on your lap.

Notice three things you can hear.

Bring your attention to the background noises you usually ignore — the humming of lights or the sounds of your neighbourhood just outside your window.

Notice two things you can smell.

Bring your attention to two smells around you — the smell of laundry detergent on your clothes or the smell of your shampoo in your hair.

Notice one thing you can taste.

You can take a sip of water, take a bite of something or just bring attention to the current taste in your mouth.

Photo by Lina Trochez on Unsplash

After the exercise, take a minute to either reflect privately or as a group how you felt before the exercise and if you feel different afterwards.

This activity was adapted from *21 Mindfulness Exercises & Activities for Adults*

Lived experience partner program

To better understand the dementia experience, the Alzheimer Society of B.C. relies on the voices of people who have firsthand knowledge of the disease. Hearing stories of resilience and courage shared by people affected by dementia can help break down stereotypes and instill hope in others. Every story has a far-reaching impact.

Lived experience partners have been directly affected by dementia. They may be living with it, or they may be caring for someone who is. They support our mission to ensure no one has to face the journey alone by sharing their experiences and insights.

"I want to still be involved. That's where I'm getting my fulfillment now, through living life and trying to open people's eyes a little bit about the disease."

- Art, Lived experience partner

Download the Lived experience framework guide (PDF)

Help us spread the word! We invite you to join us for a lived experience webinar on Wednesday, April 10 at 2 p.m. to learn more about how the Alzheimer Society of B.C. works with lived experience partners.

To register click here.

If someone in your support group would like to learn more about our **Lived Experience Partner Program**, please email us at **livedexperience@alzheimerbc.org** or visit **alzbc.org/LivedExperience**.

Help us make change through advocacy!

The Alzheimer Society of B.C. supports people affected by the disease to advocate for themselves and the people they care for when navigating the health-care system, as well as advocating for systemic change. To ensure our advocacy efforts truly reflect the diverse needs of people across the province who are on the dementia journey, we are offering new opportunities for people with lived experience of dementia and caregiving to partner with us.

Throughout 2024, we will be launching several short- and long-term advocacy projects and want to invite both people living with dementia and caregivers to take part in this important work. One key project is focused on the development and implementation of an election strategy for the upcoming provincial election. This strategy will prioritize the key issues that affect people living with dementia, their families and care providers.

These issues include improving the diagnosis experience, supporting caregivers and improving cultural sensitivity/safety.

If you're eager to get involved but don't know where to start, join us on **Wednesday, May 15 at 2 p.m.** for a special webinar on advocacy action planning. This webinar will support you to build advocacy skills and confidence and to learn about some of our upcoming projects and how you can support them.

To register click here.

If you are interested in supporting the Alzheimer Society of B.C.'s advocacy and policy activities, please email us at: advocacy@alzheimerbc.org

Upcoming dementia education

Upcoming webinars

These webinars are a great opportunity to increase your own knowledge about dementia and a great resource to share with your support group members.

Webinars are held every Wednesday via Zoom, 2 to 3:30 pm. You can visit **alzbc.org/webinars** for the most current schedule and information on how to register.

April 10 Lived experience: Working with lived experience partners

April 17 Considering the transition to long-term care

April 24 Research connects: Exploring resident and family councils in long-term care homes

May 1 From home to care home: Preparing and adjusting to the new environment

May 8 Creating engaging activities for warm weather

May 15 Become a dementia advocate

May 22 Equip yourself: Knowledge and skills to help get the support you need

May 29 Driving and dementia

Recent publications

Connections (Winter 2024): Alzheimer's Awareness Month 2024: Fostering a supporting community around families

*Insight (*Winter 2024): Building community: Alzheimer's Awareness Month

March - June 2024 First Link bulletins

Upcoming volunteer trainings

Wednesday, May 29 2024: Peer to Peer Connection (3:30 to 5 p.m. via Zoom)

To register, email the Provincial Coordinator (Volunteer Engagement), Amy Gill at **agill@alzheimerbc.org**.