

Strength in Numbers

By: Shelby Downer, Client Support Coordinator

Support groups typically meet once per month, and are facilitated by trained staff or volunteers. Each session includes informal education, as well as time for personal sharing and questions. A set of “Guiding Principles” are reviewed at the start of each group to ensure that each session creates an inclusive, respectful, and confidential environment.

It is okay to feel uncomfortable or uncertain about trying a support group, but those who attend are welcome to talk as much or as little as they would like. Many individuals benefit from hearing the stories of others, in addition to sharing their own personal experience with Alzheimer’s Disease or a related dementia. As a support group facilitator, I often see numerous nods of understanding amongst participants, and hear many empathetic statements such as “me too”, “I know what you mean”, and “I have been there too” as participants share their stories.

Benefits of Group Support

Some potential benefits of attending a support group include:

Ongoing learning. Support groups provide informal education, along with peer support and education from the lived experiences of others in the group. Everyone that attends a support group is at a different point in their journey with dementia and can offer support, coping strategies, and insight to others in the group.

Building a Circle of Support. Seeking support involves identifying and accepting that more help is needed to cope with the stressors in life. The peer support offered through support groups can strengthen this feeling of support and connection with others, in addition to existing family and community agency supports.

Feeling validated and understood. Having others be able to relate to what you are experiencing helps you understand that you are not alone. Many participants often share that it is comforting for them to hear that what they are experiencing or witnessing is often normal within the context of dementia.

Keeping in touch. Attending a support group each month is a great way to stay connected with the Alzheimer Society and stay informed of upcoming education and special events.

A chance to laugh, cry, feel frustrated, or angry. A client once told me “what doesn’t bend, breaks” and that attending a support group where she is able to have moments of laughter and discuss a range of emotions with others going through a similar experience helps her to “bend” and better cope with stressful situations.

Support Groups Available

The Alzheimer Society has support groups available for persons with dementia; care partners; or “combined” support groups where the group for persons with dementia and the group for their care partners, occur at the same location, at the same time, but in separate rooms. Specific support groups for persons with dementia in the early stages of the disease are also available.

Alzheimer Society

PETERBOROUGH, KAWARTHA LAKES, NORTHUMBERLAND & HALIBURTON

The Alzheimer Society also provides Activity Clubs once per month. Activity Clubs are also led by a trained staff or volunteer, however, these groups differ from a support group as the primary focus is on healthy brain activities and socialization.

If you are interested in registering for a support group, please contact your Client Support Coordinator to discuss which groups work best for you.

Low Scent Policy: For health reasons, the Alzheimer Society promotes a low scent environment at our events. Please avoid using scented products (perfume, scented lotion, etc) prior to attending a support group.