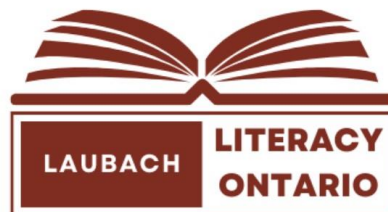
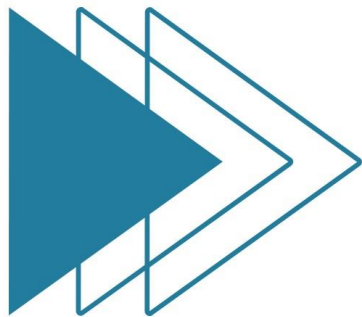




Learning Toolkit for Family Caregivers



Learning Toolkit for Family Caregivers Skills for Success Curriculum Resource Cover Page

Organization

Laubach Literacy Ontario

Curriculum Resource

Learning Toolkit for Family Caregivers

OALCF Alignment

Competency	Task Group	Level
Competency A -Find and Use Information	A1. Read continuous text	1
Competency A -Find and Use Information	A1. Read continuous text	2
Competency A -Find and Use Information	A2. Interpret documents	1
Competency A -Find and Use Information	A2. Interpret documents	2
Competency A -Find and Use Information	A3. Extract information from films, broadcasts, and presentations	N/A
Competency B - Communicate Ideas and Information	B1. Interact with others	1
Competency B - Communicate Ideas and Information	B1. Interact with others	2
Competency B - Communicate Ideas and Information	B2. Write continuous text	1
Competency B - Communicate Ideas and Information	B2. Write continuous text	2
Competency B - Communicate Ideas and Information	B3. Complete and create documents	1
Competency B - Communicate Ideas and Information	B4. Express oneself creatively	N/A



Competency C - Understand and Use Numbers	C1. Manage money	2
Competency C - Understand and Use Numbers	C3. Use measures	2
Competency C - Understand and Use Numbers	C4. Manage data	1
Competency D - Use Digital Technology	N/A	1
Competency D - Use Digital Technology	N/A	2
Competency E - Manage Learning	N/A	1

Goal Paths (check all that apply)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Employment | <input type="checkbox"/> Postsecondary |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Apprenticeship | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Independence |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Secondary School Credit | |

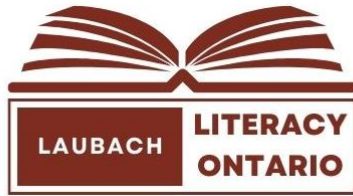
Embedded Skills for Success (check all that apply)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Adaptability | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Numeracy |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Collaboration | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Problem Solving |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Communication | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reading |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Creativity and Innovation | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Writing |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Digital | |

Notes:

Learning Toolkit for Family Caregivers

Acknowledgments Page



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The opinions expressed in this document are those of Laubach Literacy Ontario and do not necessarily reflect those of our funders.



Table of Contents

Contents

Skills for Success Curriculum Resource Cover Page.....	1
Acknowledgments Page	3
Introduction to the Learning Toolkit for Family Caregivers.....	5
Unit 1 – Overview of Family Caregivers in Ontario	7
Ten Facts about Family Caregivers in Ontario	7
Your Turn: Tasks	12
Unit 2 – Your Journey as a Family Caregiver	15
Every Story is Unique	15
Your Turn: Tasks	16
Unit 3 – The Benefits of Being a Family Caregiver.....	20
Six Benefits of Being a Caregiver.....	20
Your Turn: Tasks	27
Unit 4 – Caregiver Challenges.....	32
Seven Challenges Facing Family Caregivers.....	32
Your Turn: Tasks	40
Unit 5 – Finding Support for Your Family and Friends – and for Yourself!	44
Seven Ways to Find Support.....	44
Your Turn: Tasks	50
Unit 6 – Family Caregivers and the Skills for Success	56
Unit 7 – Ways to Reduce Caregiver Stress	76
Seven Stress Reduction Tips	76
Your Turn: Tasks	81



Introduction to the Learning Toolkit for Family Caregivers

Laubach Literacy Ontario is pleased to share the **Learning Toolkit for Family Caregivers**.

The **Learning Toolkit for Family Caregivers** was written to provide support to adult learners who:

- are caregivers right now
- might be caregivers in the future
- are interested in learning more about caregiving

Many Canadians serve as unpaid caregivers for their families and friends. Caregiving is both a rewarding and a difficult job.

Laubach Literacy Ontario wants to help adult learners learn about the many resources and community supports available for caregivers. We want to make your job easier and help you find the support you need.

This toolkit is also designed to help you build your reading and writing skills and teach you more about caregivers and the Skills for Success.



Note to Practitioners

The **Learning Toolkit for Family Caregivers** has been designed for adult learners with **Level 2** skills in Ontario's Literacy and Basic Skills program.

This curriculum resource embeds the Skills for Success and aligns with the Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework (OALCF). At the end of each Unit, there is a chart that aligns the tasks to OALCF Competencies, Task Groups, and Level Indicators.

The **Learning Toolkit for Family Caregivers** can be used in small groups, classrooms or 1-to-1 tutoring sessions.

The **Learning Toolkit for Family Caregivers** is divided into seven Units:

1. Overview of Family Caregivers in Ontario
2. Your Journey as a Family Caregiver
3. The Benefits of Being a Family Caregiver
4. Caregiver Challenges
5. Finding Support for Your Family and Friends – and for Yourself!
6. Family Caregivers and the Skills for Success
7. Tips to Reduce Caregiver Stress

Literacy practitioners can deliver all seven Units as one learning package to adult learners. Alternatively, they can just deliver the Units of most interest and value to learners.

Each Unit will take between three to four hours to complete. The length of each Unit will depend upon:

- the needs of the learners
- the time learners require to complete the activities
- the amount of discussion and engagement with the content that occurs
- the time needed to explore external links to videos and websites
- additional content and activities that literacy practitioners may choose to include



Unit 1 – Overview of Family Caregivers in Ontario

Ten Facts about Family Caregivers in Ontario

To begin the **Learning Toolkit for Family Caregivers**, let's take a big picture view of family caregivers. Let's look at caregivers across Ontario.

Here are some important facts about caregivers. You may already know some of these facts. Other facts may surprise you.

All of the statistics shared in this Unit come from the [Spotlight on Caregivers Report](#) from the Ontario Caregiver Organization. This report was created in December 2022.

FACT #1 – What is the definition of a caregiver?

The Ontario Caregiver Organization defines family caregivers as family members, friends or neighbours who provide care for someone, without pay.

Caregivers support family or friends with health conditions such as:

- long-term illness
- recovery from accident or surgery
- disease or serious health condition
- physical or mental disability
- palliative care (this means caring for someone who is dying)

FACT #2 – How many caregivers are there in Ontario?

It is estimated that there are 4 million caregivers in Ontario. In 2023, Ontario's population was 15.5 million. **This means that 26% of people living in our province are caregivers.**

That's a lot of caregivers! The population of Ontario, on average, is aging. That means the number of seniors compared to younger people is increasing. It also means we will need even MORE caregivers in the coming years.



FACT #3 – What do caregivers do?

Caregivers do many different things. Caregivers have different roles depending on the situation. Sometimes a caregiver does almost everything for their family member. Other times they share the work with another family member or friend.

Here are some examples of things caregivers might do:

Caregivers may help with **medical issues** such as:

- taking the person to doctor's appointments
- giving medicine
- searching out medical support

Caregivers may help with **personal care** such as:

- changing bandages and dressings
- helping with eating
- helping with bathing and dressing

Caregivers may help with **household care** such as:

- cleaning the house
- shopping for groceries
- cooking meals

Caregivers may help with **financial issues** such as:

- paying bills
- managing a budget
- applying for financial support

Caregivers may help with **social support** such as:

- paying a friendly visit or call to chat
- going for a drive
- taking the person to a social program in the community

FACT #4 – Who are caregivers caring for?

Most caregivers are caring for their parents. The second most common group people care for is their spouse. (The total does not add up to 100%. This is because some caregivers care for more than one person).

- 46% of caregivers are caring for a parent or parent-in-law
- 20% are caring for a spouse or partner
- 16% are caring for a grandparent
- 8% are caring for a friend or neighbour
- 6% are caring for a sibling
- 4% are caring for a child **under** the age of 18
- 3% are caring for a child **over** the age of 18
- 3% are caring for extended family

FACT #5 – How old is the person supported by caregivers?

Most people receiving care are seniors. Fewer care recipients are young adults or children.

Caregivers care for people who are in these age ranges:

- 75 years and older = 50%
- 55 to 74 years old = 28%
- 35 to 54 years old = 9%
- 18 to 34 years old = 7%
- Under 18 years old = 6%

FACT #6 – Do caregivers also have paid work outside the home?

Most caregivers also have paid work in addition to caring for a family member or friend. In Ontario, 64% of caregivers also have paid work.

Some caregivers enjoy working because it gets them out of the house. Other caregivers find it difficult to work. They find it adds more stress to their life. Some caregivers need to work even if they don't want to. They work because they or their family need the money.

FACT #7 – Do caregivers feel a lot of stress?

Yes.

Caregiving is a lot of work. Sometimes it is hard to find support. Some caregivers feel very alone. Many caregivers feel very stressed. Statistics tell us that 63% of caregivers have reached their breaking point, but they keep caregiving anyway.

Later in this toolkit, we share ways to get help as a caregiver. We also talk about strategies to help you feel less stressed.

FACT #8 – What support do caregivers need?

The top three supports that caregivers say they need are:

- **Respite support**
 - Respite support means getting temporary help to support the care recipient. This helps the caregiver to take a break.
- **Mental health support**
- **Peer support**
 - Peer support means linking with other caregivers to share, learn and support each other. Peer support could happen at in-person meetings. Peer support could also happen via online support groups or by telephone calls.

FACT #9 – Are caregivers able to access the support they need?

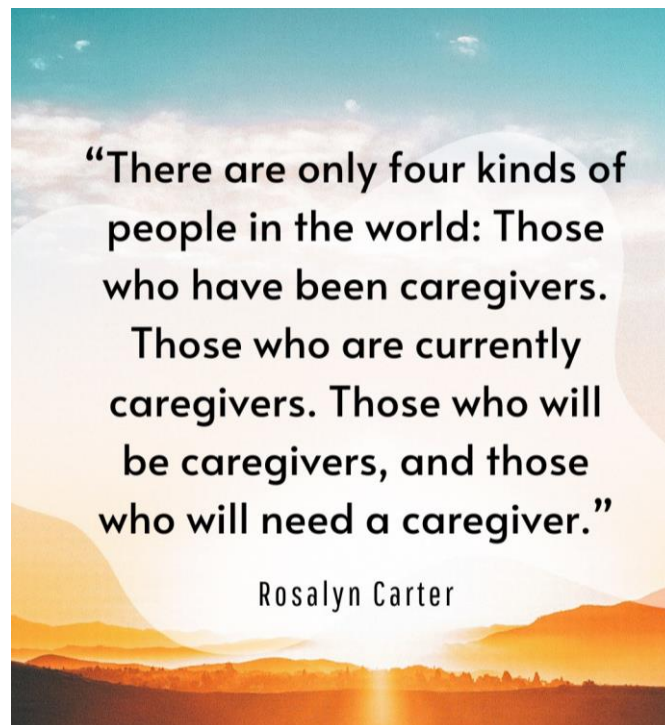
Many caregivers cannot get the support they need. One-third (33%) of caregivers face barriers to getting the help they need to care for their family members.

Some of the barriers to getting help are:

- long wait times for services
- services not being available in their area

FACT #10 – How important are caregivers to our healthcare system?

Caregivers are very important! The Ontario Caregiver Organization estimates that unpaid caregivers provide 75% of the care in our healthcare system. It would be very hard for our healthcare system to operate without caregivers. Caregivers provide important support to their family and friends.



Your Turn: Tasks

1. We learned that 26% of people living in Ontario are unpaid caregivers. Did this surprise you?

- ____ Yes
- ____ No
- ____ Somewhat

2. In Fact #3, we learned about some of the ways that caregivers help. List two more things caregivers might do to help.

- _____
- _____

3. In Ontario, who are most caregivers caring for? Is it a parent, a spouse, a child, a grandparent or a friend?

- _____

4. Fact #8 shares the top three supports needed by Ontario caregivers. Write one sentence saying which support you think is the most important. Write one reason why you think this support matters.

5. Caregivers said holding peer support groups would help them to get more support. If you wanted to join a peer support group, which kind of group would you prefer? (Circle your top choice below)

- A. In-person support group
- B. Online support group via Zoom (or another platform)
- C. Online support group on a private Facebook page
- D. Over the telephone

6. Write down two reasons this type of peer support group would be the best for you. Share your answers with your teacher or classmates.

- _____
- _____

7. We learned that many caregivers are feeling a lot of stress. Write two reasons why a caregiver might be very stressed. Write one sentence sharing a way the caregiver could improve the situation.

8. What percentage of caregivers also have paid work outside the home?

- _____

9. Write one reason why you think caregivers are important. It could be something you learned about in this resource, or it could be a reason from your own life experience. Share your answer with your teacher or classmates.

For Practitioners
Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework
Competencies, Task Groups, and Level Indicators

Unit 1 – Overview of Family Caregivers in Ontario

- Question 1 – **B2.1**
- Question 2 – **B2.1**
- Question 3 – **A1.1**
- Question 4 – **B2.2**
- Question 5 – **A1.2**
- Question 6 – **B2.1, B1.2**
- Question 7 – **B2.2**
- Question 8 – **A1.1**
- Question 9 – **B2.1, B1.2**

Skills for Success: Communication, Reading, Writing

Unit 2 – Your Journey as a Family Caregiver

Every Story is Unique

We've looked at the big picture of caregivers in Ontario. Now, let's look more personally at what it is like to be a caregiver. There is no one right way to be a caregiver. Each situation is unique.

It is often said that being a caregiver is a job that no one applies for. Instead, we do the job of unpaid caregiving because someone we care about needs help.

There are many ways to be a caregiver. Here are some examples.

- Sometimes we share the job of caregiver with other family members or friends. Sometimes we do it alone with very little help.
- Sometimes we don't even want to do the job of caregiver, but there is no one else to help.
- In some cases, the person we care for lives with us. In other cases, the person lives separately from us. They may be in the hospital, a retirement home, or a long-term care home. Or they may live in their own home and still need our support.
- Some caregivers help a few hours per week. For others, caregiving has become a full-time job.
- Sometimes, the person needs a small amount of help. Maybe they need help with meals and cleaning. Maybe they need us to take them to appointments. Maybe they are lonely, and we take them to social activities.
- Other times, the person is seriously ill and needs personal and basic medical care. In these cases, the caregiver may feel like they are doing the work of a nurse or a personal support worker. It may be frightening and overwhelming.
- Some caregivers feel supported and valued. Others feel that their support is unvalued by their family, friends, and community.
- Some caregivers find caregiving to be a happy and rewarding experience. For other caregivers, it is difficult and frustrating.

Your Turn: Tasks

This resource is created for people who are caregivers already. Take a moment to think about your caregiving story. If you are not a caregiver, you can answer these questions by thinking of a caregiver you know. If you don't want to share some of your answers, that is fine. They may feel too personal to share.

1. Who are you caring for? Is it your parent, sibling, spouse, child, friend or someone else?

○ _____

2. How long have you been a caregiver?

○ _____

3. Are you a part-time or full-time caregiver?

○ _____

4. Does the person you are caring for live with you?

○ _____

5. What are three of the main tasks you do as a caregiver?

○ _____

○ _____

○ _____

6. Creative Images for Caregiving

Let's use our creativity to talk about your caregiving journey.

STEP ONE:

- Think of two words that express how you feel about caregiving.
- They could be words like love, busy, frustration or hope. They can be any words that make sense to you.

In our example, we'll pick the words "tired" and "family".

STEP TWO:

- Go to Pixabay at <https://pixabay.com/>
- In the search bar, enter the words you have chosen to express how you feel.

For example, we put "tired" in the search bar. Over 4,000 free images came up. Next, we put "family" in the search bar. Over 17,000 free images came up.

STEP THREE:

- Scroll through some of the images on Pixabay related to your two words. Pick one image for each of your words that show how you feel about caregiving.

Here are the two images we picked for "tired" and "family".



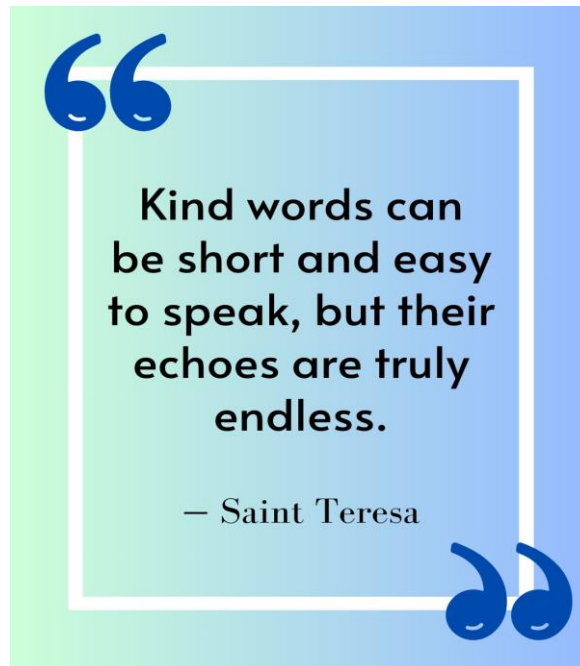
STEP FOUR:

- Show your teacher or classmates which two images you picked to represent how you feel about caregiving. Explain why you picked those two images.

- 7. Write down two things that would make you feel more supported and valued as a caregiver. Share your ideas with your teacher or classmates.**

- 8. Write a note about one thing you are proud of as a caregiver.**

**Whatever your caregiving journey looks like, thank you for all you do!
What you do matters.**



For Practitioners
Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework
Competencies, Task Groups, and Level Indicators

Unit 2 – Your Journey as a Family Caregiver

- Questions 1 to 4 – **B2.1**
- Question 5 – **B2.2**
- Question 6 – **B1.2, B4, D.2**
- Question 7 – **B1.2, B2.2**
- Question 8 – **B2.2**

Skills for Success: Creativity and Innovation, Communication, Reading and Writing

Unit 3 – The Benefits of Being a Family Caregiver

Six Benefits of Being a Caregiver

You often hear about the challenges facing caregivers. Despite the challenges, there are many benefits as well.

Here are six benefits of being a caregiver:

1. Giving back to someone they care about
2. Knowing their loved one is getting good care
3. Building closer relationships
4. Growing as a person
5. Building new skills
6. Teaching others about caregiving

“

There will come a time when your loved one is gone, and you will find comfort in the fact that you were their caregiver.

— Karen Coetzer

”

1. Giving back to someone they care about

Many caregivers enjoy giving back to someone they care about. In the case of parents and grandparents, the person being cared for may have once cared for them.

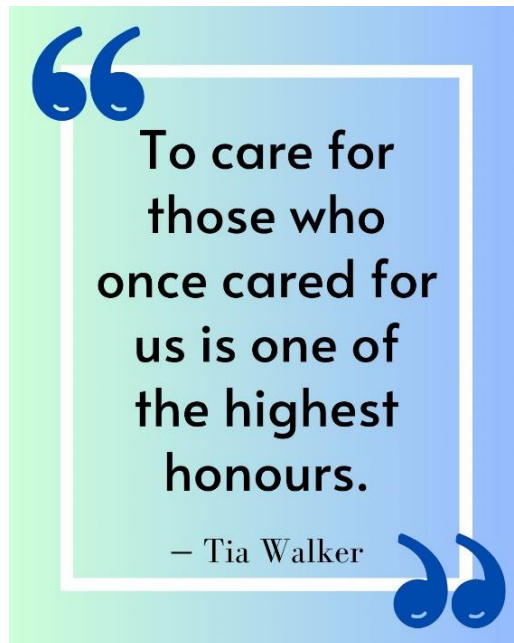
For some caregivers, giving care feels like a burden. It's okay to feel that way. Other caregivers feel happy to give back to a family member or friend who needs their help.

For example...

Omar loves his grandfather, Hamza. Hamza had a difficult life. Hamza worked very hard for low pay, but Hamza always had time for his family. Omar has many happy memories. Now Hamza has Parkinson's Disease. Hamza lives in a retirement home. The home takes good care of Hamza, but he is lonely. Hamza misses his family.

Omar decides to visit his grandfather twice per week. Omar plays chess with Hamza. They eat meals together and look at old photographs. Sometimes, Omar takes Hamza out for a drive.

Hamza is glad to see his grandson. Omar is happy too. Hamza did so much for Omar when he was a child. Omar wants to show respect and love to Hamza now that his grandfather is old and sick.



2. Knowing their loved one is getting good care

Caregivers often worry about their loved ones who are ill. If their family member still lives at home, families may wonder, are their loved ones getting enough care?

Personal Support Workers (PSWs) can provide helpful support. But there are often challenges such as:

- there are not enough PSWs available
- it is difficult to get enough hours of subsidized community homecare support
- private care from PSWs is very expensive

As well, hospitals and nursing homes are busy places. Sometimes, there are not enough healthcare staff available. Caregivers may feel that their loved one needs more support than what they are getting while at the hospital or nursing home.

For example, a caregiver may come into the hospital to visit their loved one. The caregiver may notice that their loved one often does not eat their meals if they aren't there to help.

Sometimes family members say they will help when someone is ill and needs care, but the time they are willing to give may not be very much. Some family members don't show up to help at all. For example, a caregiver finds out that their grandmother was left alone at home when she shouldn't have been. The caregiver starts to worry – are their loved ones getting good enough care?

In many cases, people take the role of providing care seriously. The caregiver then knows for sure that their loved ones are receiving good care.

For example...

Samir's dad Rohan lives alone. Rohan is elderly. He has low-vision and is diabetic. Home and Community Care Support Services will only give Rohan four hours of homecare support per week. That is not enough care. Samir knows Rohan needs four hours per **day** of support! This is the last straw.

Samir and her husband Jim decide to invite Rohan to live with them. Rohan will get lots of support while living with Samir, and Samir will know that her dad is well cared for.



3. Building closer relationships

Caregiving can make family relationships closer.

Caregiving requires people to try their best to:

- be caring and kind
- think of the needs of others
- show patience
- make time for loved ones
- show support in times of need
- help even when they are tired

These are amazing traits. In our busy world, it can be challenging to slow down and make time for others. Caregiving can create deeper appreciation and respect in families. After all, caregiving is an act of love.

For example...

Tina and Judy are sisters. They are not close. They often fought as teenagers. The sisters have nothing in common. Tina and Judy live in different cities. But now everything has changed. Tina has breast cancer. Judy decides to help her sister during the chemo treatments.

Tina needs a lot of help. Judy is patient and helpful during the treatments. Judy never had a chance to care for Tina before. Tina is the older sister and she always seemed so strong. The sisters have many conversations. They talk about things that matter, like life and death. They've never talked about these things before.

Tina and Judy spend more time together than they have since they were young. They learn a lot about each other. They find out they have many common interests. Caregiving has deepened their relationship.

Judy is so glad she came to help her sister!

4. Growing as a person

The job of a caregiver is often hard. Caregivers need to be strong. Caregivers need to develop many different skills. Being a caregiver often means that people grow and learn.

Caregiving can help people to grow in many ways including:

- being more patient with others
- showing more understanding to people facing hard times
- acting with more compassion
- gaining more strength to face challenges
- learning to be more tolerant
- showing more respect for others

Of course, caregivers don't act like this every day. That would be impossible. Everyone has bad days. But many caregivers start to slowly grow and develop more skills than they had before.

“Helping and caring for someone is a selfless act and often summons our best humanity.”

(Ruth Drew, Alzheimer's Association)



5. Building new skills

Caregivers build **many** skills through caregiving. The skills gained may depend on the health conditions faced by their loved ones.

Here is a list of some of the skills caregivers might learn:

- navigating the healthcare system
- interacting with healthcare providers
- learning more about health conditions
- managing the finances of a loved one
- arranging for the online delivery of groceries
- organizing schedules
- changing bandages and caring for wounds
- cooking meals for someone with a special diet
- feeding someone who can no longer feed themselves.
- advocating for better care for their loved ones
- learning how to care for **themselves** and prevent burnout

In *Unit 7 – Family Caregivers and the Skills for Success*, we talk more about caregivers and skills development.

For example...

Sarah's mother June has dementia. June often gets angry for no reason. June used to be quiet and gentle. Sarah isn't sure how to help her mom. Sarah is worried. She wants to learn how to better help June.

Sarah contacts the Alzheimer's Society. They share resources with Sarah to teach her about dementia. Sarah learns a lot. Sarah finds a very helpful resource on how to communicate with people who have dementia.

This information helps Sarah to understand why June gets angry. Learning new communication skills will help Sarah to better support June.



6. Teaching others about caregiving

Through their actions, caregivers can show others very important life lessons.

Life lessons from caregivers might include:

- helping vulnerable people is important
- giving to others makes the world a better place
- showing kindness is a great strength
- doing difficult things takes courage

For example...

Tony's mother Mary is blind. She also has limited mobility and uses a wheelchair. Mary lives in a retirement home.

Tony helps his mother a lot. Tony helps Mary because he loves her. Tony also wants to show his children that it's important to care about people, and it's important to help them when you can.

When his children get older, Tony wants them to remember that the family cared for Mary. He hopes this will inspire his children to help others.

Tony also involves his children in helping Mary. The children download audiobooks to Mary's phone. They read to her sometimes. They help Mary to learn how to use technology. Tony thinks learning to care starts close to home. It starts by caring for Mary.

“

I wanted my kids to learn about caregiving at home. I wanted them to see that we all matter. And that nobody gets left behind.

— Anna Cohen

”

Your Turn: Tasks

1. In this Unit we shared six benefits of being a caregiver. Write down which benefit you think is the most important.

- _____

2. Write down two reasons why you think this benefit is the most important. Share your reasons with your teacher or classmates.

3. Go to the “Growing as a person” section. What were two of the ways that people might grow and learn because of being caregivers?

- _____

- _____

4. Giving back by helping others.

Write an email to your teacher. Tell them about a time when you gave back by helping a family member or friend in need.

In the email, write about these two things:

- Who did you help?
- What did you do for them?

5. Building closer relationships with Judy and Tina.

Read the example in the “**Building closer relationships**” section. In this example, Judy helps her sister Tina during Tina’s cancer journey. The sisters haven’t been close for many years. Caregiving has made them feel close again. Judy must go back to her home in a different city. The sisters want to find ways to stay close.

With your teacher or classmates, discuss some things the sisters could do to build their relationship. Write down two things you think would help the sisters stay close.

- _____
- _____

6. Adapting to change with Rohan and Samir.

Read the example in the “**Knowing their loved one is getting good care**” section. At the end of this example, Rohan will be moving in with his daughter Samir and her husband, Jim. Rohan is used to living alone. Samir and Jim aren’t used to having a parent living with them. Change can be hard.

This situation will need everyone to adapt to change. Adaptability is being able to adjust when things change around you.

Here are four things Rohan, Samir and Jim could do to adapt to change. Which of the four ways do you think would work best? Put a checkmark beside your answer.

- A. They could hope for the best. Rohan could move in with Samir and Jim right away. They could solve any needs that come up later.
- B. They could talk to a counselor at the Senior’s Centre. This counselor knows a lot about seniors moving in with their families. This counselor could help them develop a plan.
- C. The family could meet with Rohan’s family doctor. They could ask the doctor for her ideas about the best thing to do. The doctor might be able to share resources to help them.
- D. Rohan, Samir, and Jim could meet with other family members. They could get everyone’s opinion. Then they could decide what to do.

7. Write down two reasons why you think your choice is the best way to help this family adapt to change. Share your reasons with your teacher or classmates. Remember that there are no wrong answers.

8. Learning life lessons.

Under the “**Teaching others about caregiving**” section, we shared four life lessons from caregivers. Which of these four life lessons do you think is the most important? Put a checkmark beside your answer.

- A. Helping vulnerable people is important
- B. Giving to others makes the world a better place
- C. Showing kindness is a great strength
- D. Doing difficult things takes courage

9. Note of thanks.

Write a note of thanks to a caregiver who may be feeling overwhelmed.

To write this note pick one life lesson. The lesson can be from our list. Or it can be a life lesson you’ve thought of yourself.

Write a note thanking the caregiver for showing an important life lesson to their families and friends. The note should be about three sentences long.

For Practitioners
Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework
Competencies, Task Groups, and Level Indicators

Unit 3 – The Benefits of Being a Family Caregiver

- Question 1 – **B2.1**
- Question 2 – **B1.2, B2.2**
- Question 3 – **A1.1**
- Question 4 – **B2.2, D.1**
- Question 5 – **B1.2, B2.2**
- Question 6 – **A1.2**
- Question 7 – **B1.2, B2.2**
- Question 8 – **A1.2**
- Question 9 – **B2.2**

Skills for Success: Adaptability, Communication, Digital, Reading and Writing

Unit 4 – Caregiver Challenges

Seven Challenges Facing Family Caregivers

We've talked about the benefits of caregiving. Now it's time to think about caregiver challenges. There are **many** challenges facing caregivers. As we said before, 63% of caregivers in Ontario say they have reached their breaking point. But they keep caregiving anyway.

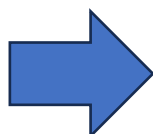
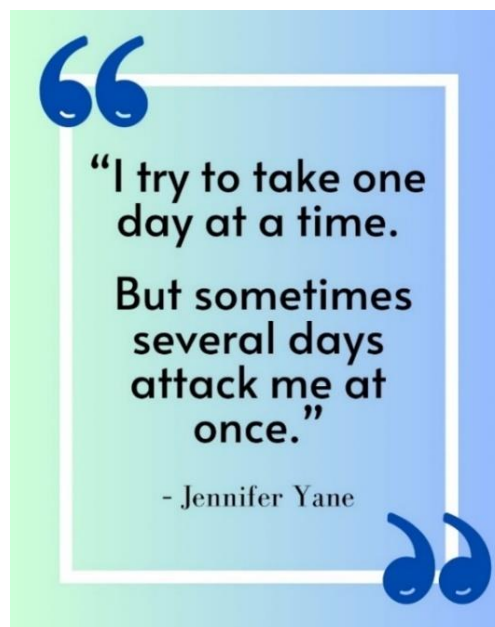
In this Unit, we share seven challenges facing caregivers. As you read about the challenges, **remember that help is available**. Units 5 and 6 of this resource will help you to find support and resources for your family and for **yourself**.



Contacting [211 Ontario](#) is always a good idea. They can link you to the support you need.

Now, let's jump in. Here are seven challenges facing caregivers:

1. Lack of time
2. Challenges with providing healthcare
3. Hard to find programs and services
4. Lack of support from family and friends
5. Extra costs
6. Jobs
7. Caregiver stress and burn-out



All of the statistics shared in this Unit come from the [Spotlight on Caregivers Report](#) from the Ontario Caregiver Organization. This report was created in December 2022.

1. Lack of time

Time – the one thing every caregiver does not have enough of! Caregivers are rushed off their feet. It can feel like everyone needs a part of them. There are not enough hours in the day. Caregivers are often overwhelmed by everything that needs to be done.

Sometimes the needs of the person being cared for take up a lot of time. Their needs may be complex. They may need many medical appointments. They need care – food, medical care, social activities and so much more.

Caregivers need time for other activities such as:

- spending time with other family members and friends
- caring for young children while also caregiving for a family member
- doing chores around the house (shopping, cleaning, cooking, etc.)
- working or going to school
- doing healthy activities such as exercise or hobbies
- taking time to rest and relax

For example...

Lexi is a caregiver. Lexi works part-time and has a family. Lexi's mom is Susan. Susan has early-stage dementia. Susan lives at a retirement home. Lexi helps her mom with medical issues and social activities.

Lexi does many things for Susan including:

- taking Susan to medical appointments
- bringing Susan to social events at the community centre
- buying groceries for Susan

Lexi also has twin boys. They are 12 years old. Her boys also need her time. Lexi doesn't feel she has enough time for everyone. Lexi feels overwhelmed and very stressed.

2. Challenges with providing healthcare

Research by the Ontario Caregiver Organization estimates that unpaid caregivers provide 75% of the care in our healthcare system.

They also found that 79% of caregivers have taken on responsibilities that otherwise would have been done by Personal Support Workers or nurses.

It would be very hard for our healthcare system to operate without caregivers. However, many caregivers feel that there is a lack of support for their important healthcare role.

Many caregivers feel they do not get the training, equipment and support they need to properly take care of their family or friends.

“

79% of caregivers have taken on responsibilities that otherwise would have been done by PSWs or nurses.

- Ontario Caregiver Organization

”

Here are some of the healthcare challenges facing caregivers:

- Many caregivers must perform medical tasks. Sometimes caregivers do not feel trained to do these tasks. They worry they might do something wrong.

Some examples include:

- giving injections
 - changing bandages
 - checking wounds
 - giving medications
- Sometimes caregivers take on tasks that are not safe for them because they are the only ones available to do the task. For example, lifting a heavy family member out of bed.
- Some caregivers are responsible for caring for people who have behavioural challenges. Some examples are caring for people with a severe mental illness or dementia. Caregivers may lack training and resources to safely deal with challenging behaviours.

3. Hard to find programs and services

Caregivers work so hard. They are a key part of Ontario's healthcare system. But it's often difficult for caregivers to find the programs and services they need. Finding the right services makes a big difference to caregivers. It means they can provide better support to the person they care for. It means they can find better support for themselves.

Here are some of the services caregivers might want to access:

- homecare
- healthcare
- financial supports
- meal programs
- social activities
- mental health

Caregivers say the top barriers they face to getting support are:

- long wait times for services
- services aren't available in the community where they live

There are no easy answers to finding services. We will share ideas and information on this topic in *Unit 5 – Finding Support for Your Family and Friends*

For example...

Paz is a caregiver. Paz supports his mother and father. Paz's parents are in their 90s. They live in their own home and have many health issues. Paz helps them but he has a job too. Paz notices his parents can't cook meals very well anymore. They can still make easy meals like breakfast and lunch. But supper is too hard for his parents.

At first, Paz brings over suppers for his parents. But Paz is very busy and does not have time to make and bring supper every day. Paz can't afford meal delivery from restaurants. He needs help! Paz calls [211 Ontario](#). 211 Ontario refers Paz to Meals on Wheels. This program brings hot meals to seniors at a low cost. His parents enjoy the hot meals and there is lots of variety. Friendly volunteers deliver the meals.

4. Lack of support from family and friends

Many caregivers say that they do not have enough support. Many caregivers wish their family and friends could help them more.

Support may be lacking in many ways including:

- Other family members may not help with caregiving. They may live too far away. They may live nearby but just don't help. Or they may help a little but leave the caregiver to do most of the work.
- Friends of the person you are caregiving for may not visit anymore. This can make your family member feel sad and lonely. Friendly visits could really help. Some people feel like they and the person they are caring for have fallen off the face of the earth.
- Some caregivers feel that their own friends stop contacting them. Friends may stop visiting, texting or calling. Friends may think that caregivers are too busy. Maybe the caregiver had to stop working and they no longer see their work friends. Maybe it is difficult for the caregiver to make time for friends. Some caregivers may feel like their friends no longer care about them.
- Some caregivers find it hard to ask for help. Their friends and family don't know they need help.

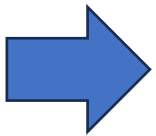
For example...

Tom is a caregiver. Tom's wife Lina was in a bad car accident. Lina will need to recover for 11 months at home. Lina needs Tom's help for walking, bathing and cooking. Tom does all the dishes and laundry. He also helps Lina with her medical needs. Tom is very busy.

At first, their friends helped Tom. They brought over meals and muffins. They sent cards and texts. The friends visited Lina. As time went by everyone stopped helping. Tom and Lina miss their friends. They look on Facebook and it seems like everyone is having fun without them. They wonder why their friends have forgotten them.

5. Extra costs

Money is a challenge for many caregivers. Caregivers sometimes lose or quit their jobs. Caregivers often must pay for items needed by the person they are caring for. Government or community programs may help with these costs. But many costs are not covered. And sometimes, caregivers do not know how to find these programs.



The [Canadian Centre for Caregiving Excellence](#) found that **63% of caregivers faced financial hardship due to their caregiving duties.**

Here are examples of things that caregivers might pay for:

- safety equipment such as grab bars, handrails, and canes
- special food such as protein drinks and high-calorie meals
- transportation and parking costs for appointments
- medical supplies such as pain relievers, bandages or a thermometer
- personal care items such as adult diapers and accessible clothing

For example...

Mina is a caregiver. Mina cares for her mother Veda. Veda broke her hip and now must use a walker. Veda lives with Mina and her husband. Mina gave up a job she loved to care for Veda. Now Mina's family income is much less. Veda is on disability support and has very little money. Mina gave up her job, and now Mina must also pay for many supplies for Veda.

Here are a few of the things Mina pays for to help Veda:

- a walker
- protein drinks
- bedrails

The cost of living is already very high. And now Mina has many things to buy for Veda. Mina and her husband are worried. They are wondering how they will pay for everything.

6. Jobs

Most caregivers (64%) also have paid work. Some caregivers enjoy working. They like to get out of the house. They like to be with their friends at work. They need to earn money. Others find the combination of work and caregiving very stressful. Working caregivers often feel torn between work and home. They may find that there is just not enough time for both.

Because of the stress, 37% of Ontario caregivers say they might work fewer hours or quit their jobs. As well, some caregivers may decide to work at a job that pays less because it gives them more flexibility.

Luckily some employers are supportive of caregivers. Some employers:

- let caregivers work more flexible hours
- give caregivers more time off to go to appointments
- add more paid days off for sick leave
- allow caregivers to work remotely more often

Some employers are not very flexible with caregivers. This can make it difficult for caregivers to work. One-third of caregivers are worried about losing their jobs because of their caregiving duties.

It is a big problem for families when caregivers must quit their jobs. The cost of living is very high. Rent and groceries are expensive. Jobs are important to families. Quitting your job can feel like trading one kind of stress for another.

It is also a problem for employers when caregivers quit their jobs. They are losing good workers.

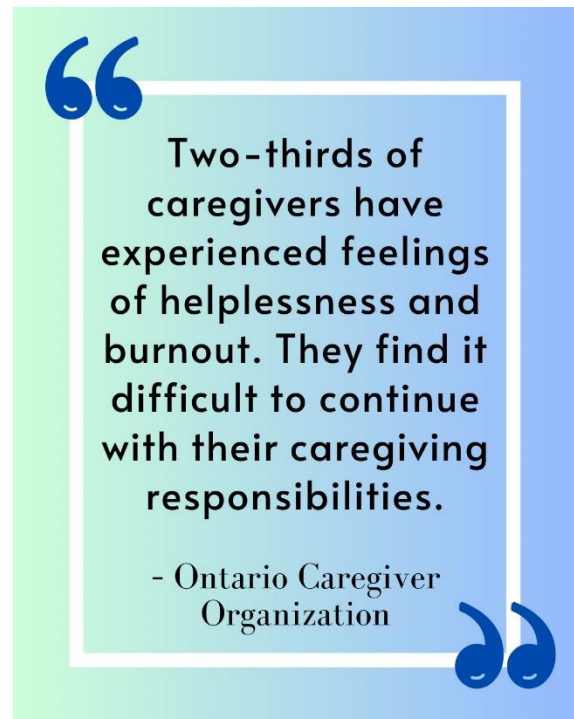
“One-third of caregivers are worried about losing their job because of their caregiving duties.”
- Ontario Caregiver Organization

7. Caregiver stress and burnout

All these challenges we've talked about lead to caregiver stress and burnout. Some caregivers are not coping well. The Ontario Caregiver Organization found that two-thirds (67%) of caregivers are finding it difficult to continue caregiving.

Stress and burn-out may make caregivers struggle with:

- depression
- tiredness
- isolation
- grief
- anger
- frustration
- helplessness
- sadness
- anxiety



Caregiver stress and burn-out are **very** serious issues. At times, caregivers are risking their own health to care for others.

Caregivers need to learn how to take care of themselves too. We will learn about this issue in *Unit 6 – Finding Support for YOU*

"You have two hands. One to help yourself, and one to help others". (Audrey Hepburn)

Your Turn: Tasks

1. In this Unit we shared seven caregiver challenges. Write down which challenge you think is the most difficult.

○ _____

2. Write down two reasons why you think this challenge is the most difficult. Share your reasons with your teacher or classmates.

3. Go to the “Challenges with providing healthcare” section. Write down two of the challenges caregivers are faced with.

○ _____

○ _____

4. Go to the “Hard to find programs and services” section. Write down the top two barriers that caregivers face in getting support.

- _____
- _____

5. Problem-solving with Tom and Lina.

Read the example in the “**Lack of support from family and friends**” section. In this example, Tom is caring for his wife Lina. Tom and Lina have a problem. Tom is overwhelmed. Lina is lonely. Their friends aren’t visiting them anymore. They would like their friends to visit them again.

Here are four things Tom and Lina could do to try to solve their problem. Which of the four ways do you think would work best? Put a checkmark beside your answer.

- A. Post on Facebook saying how upset they are that their friends aren’t visiting.
- B. Call their two closest friends and ask them to visit.
- C. Send emails to all their friends asking them to visit.
- D. Don’t say anything to their friends. Find another way to get support.

6. Write down two reasons why you think your choice is the best way to solve Tom and Lina’s problem. Share your reasons with your teacher or classmates.

7. Paying for extra costs is expensive!

Under “**Extra costs**”, we learned that caregivers often must buy items for the people they are caring for. We shared an example, where Mina is caring for her mother Veda.

In our example, Mina buys her mother protein drinks (Ensure). Go to Walmart’s website at <https://www.walmart.ca/en>. Search for Ensure protein drinks. Write down the cost of a pack of six Ensure drinks.

Next, go to the Zehr’s website at <https://www.zehrs.ca/>. Search for Ensure protein drinks. Write down the cost of a pack of six Ensure drinks.

Compare the costs and write down which store has the lower price.

- Cost at Walmart: _____
- Cost at Zehr’s: _____
- Which store has the lower price? _____

8. In the “Jobs” section, we learned that being a working caregiver is hard. Some people say it’s like having two full-time jobs! Write a note to encourage a working caregiver. The note should be about two sentences long.

9. Look at the “Caregiver stress and burn-out” section. Write down the percentage of caregivers who are finding it difficult to continue caregiving.

○ _____

For Practitioners
Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework
Competencies, Task Groups, and Level Indicators

Unit 4 – Caregiver Challenges

- Question 1 – **B2.1**
- Question 2 – **B1.2, B2.2**
- Question 3 – **A1.1**
- Question 4 – **A1.1**
- Question 5 – **A1.2**
- Question 6 – **B1.2, B2.2**
- Question 7 – **C4.1, D.1**
- Question 8 – **B2.2**
- Question 9 – **A1.1**

Skills for Success: Communication, Digital, Numeracy, Problem-solving, Reading and Writing

Unit 5 – Finding Support for Your Family and Friends – and for Yourself!

Seven Ways to Find Support

Caregivers support their family and friends with many issues. But our family and friends also need support from medical and community services.

Caregivers do so much for other people. But caregivers also need support too. Caregivers cannot do it alone!

Here are seven ways caregivers can find support for their family, friends and themselves.

1. Health811

Caregivers often have health concerns about their family members. Health811 is a valuable source of support. Health811 is a free service offered by the Ontario government.

Health811 connects people to a registered nurse for health advice.

Health811 is available 24 hours a day, 7 days per week. Health811 is for **non-urgent** health advice.

In a medical emergency – call 911

Here's how caregivers can connect with Health811:

- call 811
- chat online
- visit their website: <https://health811.ontario.ca/>



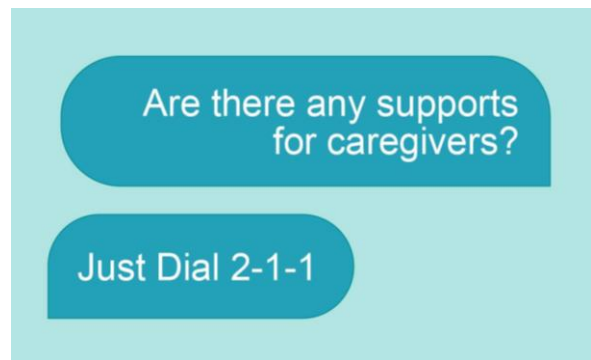
2. 211 Ontario

211 Ontario can help caregivers get the support they need. 211 Ontario is a free helpline. It connects people to services in their community.

With 211 Ontario you can find the services your family needs by talking to a real live person. Or you can connect with 211 Ontario online by email or chat, or by visiting their website. 211 also offers services in many languages.

Here are some examples of topics that caregivers might ask 211 about:

- homecare services
- meal services
- mental health supports
- grief counselling
- assistive devices
- services for people with disabilities
- long term care homes



The 211 telephone service is available Monday to Friday from 7 am to 9 pm. You can use their website to find services at any time.

Here's how caregivers can connect with 211 Ontario:

- call 211
- text 211
- website: <https://211ontario.ca/>
- online chat
- email: gethelp@211ontario.ca



3. Home and Community Care Support Services

Ontario has 14 Home and Community Care Support Services organizations. These organizations coordinate two very important health services in our province:

- homecare
- community-based care

To find Home and Community Care Support Services in your region, click on this website: <https://healthcareathome.ca/>. Scroll down to “Find Your Local Branch”.

This section of the website lists the 14 Home and Community Care Support Services organizations in Ontario. Choose your area from the list. Or click on your region on the map of Ontario.



We selected “[North Simcoe Muskoka](#)” from the list.

- Once you’ve selected your area, you can call the “Information and Referral” line to talk about support needs.
- You can also click on the Healthline for your region. Each Healthline shares information on health services in that area.


North Simcoe Muskoka

Information and Referral

310-2222
(No area code required)

Toll-free: **1-888-721-2222**
Fax: **705-792-6270**
TTY: **711**

Visit North Simcoe Muskoka Healthline
nsmhealthline.ca



4. The Ontario Caregiver Organization

The Ontario Caregiver Organization (OCO) is a great resource for caregivers. We will only focus on a few of them. Be sure to visit the OCO website to find other useful tools for caregivers. All their resources are free!



Ontario Caregiver Helpline

- contact the Ontario Caregiver Helpline to get information and referrals for the support you need
- call **1-833-416-2273**
- this service is available 24 hours per day, 7 days per week



Online support groups

- the Ontario Caregiver Organization hosts online support groups for caregivers
- in these groups caregivers connect with other caregivers in a supportive environment
- caregivers can share their challenges, successes, and concerns
- click [here](#) to learn more



Webinars

- the Ontario Caregiver Organization offers webinars on many topics, including:
 - Managing care
 - Financial and legal tips for caregivers
 - Caregiver health and well-being
- the webinars are offered live. They are also recorded and posted on YouTube
- click [here](#) to learn more



1:1 Peer support

- the Ontario Caregiver Organization has a 1:1 Peer Support Program
- this program lets you connect over the phone with another caregiver to get support
- click [here](#) to learn more about this program



5. Your family doctor

Tell your family doctor about your family's support needs. Tell them about your own needs.

Doctors can refer you to:

- specialists
- other health professionals you need
- counselling
- community support

Be honest about the needs of the person you are caring for. Be honest about **your** needs. For example, if you are experiencing burn-out, tell your doctor. If you don't have a family doctor, visit a walk-in clinic.

6. Mental health supports

The Ontario government created the "Find Mental Health Support" [website](#). This website links to many helpful (and free) mental health resources including:

- ConnexOntario Helpline
- addiction support
- healing after violence
- distress and crisis services
- workplace mental health
- mental health resources for Indigenous communities
- mental health resources for children and youth



7. National and provincial support organizations

National and provincial support organizations have been set up to help families impacted by health conditions. These organizations are helpful to caregivers.

Support organizations offer help such as:

- information and resources
- links to peer support
- training videos
- awareness and advocacy

Here are three examples:

Condition	Support Organization	URL
Autism	Autism Ontario	https://www.autismontario.com/
Dementia	Alzheimer Society of Ontario	https://alzheimer.ca/on/en
Diabetes	Diabetes Canada	https://www.diabetes.ca/

Search the internet to see if there is a national or provincial support organization for the health condition facing your family. If there is, be sure to connect with them. They can be a great support for you!

Canadian Centre for Caregiving Excellence

The Canadian Centre for Caregiving Excellence is a national support organization. They have the lead role in promoting the value of caregivers. They work hard to let politicians (and others) know that caregivers are very important to Canada.



The Canadian Centre for Caregiving Excellence shares helpful resources, videos, and training tools. You can find these resources on the Centre's [website](#).

Your Turn: Tasks

1. Getting mental health support for Anika

Arya and Jash are worried about their daughter Anika. Anika is 16 years old. Ever since Anika went to a new school, things have changed. Anika seems depressed. She never smiles. Anika never contacts her friends. She rarely leaves the house. Anika won't say what's wrong.

Arya and Jash don't know what to do.

Let's look at the "Find Mental Health Support" website for ideas to help this family.

- Click on the "Find Mental Health Support" website:
<https://www.ontario.ca/page/find-mental-health-support>
- Click on the "Children and Youth" section.
- There are six areas in this section. Explore one of them.
- Write an email to your teacher. Tell your teacher which topic area you explored. Tell your teacher two things you learned that could help Anika. The email should be about three sentences long.

2. Phone or email? Pros and cons

Caregivers can contact 211 Ontario in a few ways. Two of these ways are by phone and by email. Create a chart to show two pros and two cons of contacting 211 by phone and by email.

Contacting 211	Pros	Cons
Phone		
Email		

3. Write an email asking about respite care

Many caregivers need to have access to respite care.

Respite care is when a caregiver gets a break from caregiving. For example, respite care might mean that a family member with dementia goes to an adult day program twice per week.

- Write an email to 211 Ontario asking for information about respite care programs in your community. Ask for the names of these programs and when they are open. The email should be about three sentences long. Send the email to your teacher.

4. Exploring homecare services

Ontario's Home and Community Care Support Services organizations are important to caregivers. They coordinate many services such as homecare and community care.

Let's learn more about their homecare services.

- Click on this webpage: <https://healthcareathome.ca/home-care/>
- Look at what types of homecare services are available.
- Discuss homecare services with your teacher or classmates. You could talk about things like:
 - Which homecare services are needed by your family and friends?
 - Are there other homecare services that should be available?
- Write an email to your teacher. Tell your teacher about two types of homecare services that are available. The email should be about three sentences long.

5. Finding your region's Home and Community Care Support Services

It's important to be able to find your region's Home and Community Care Support Services organization.

Here are the steps to take:

- click on this website: <https://healthcareathome.ca/>
- scroll down and click on "Find Your Local Branch"
- look at the list and click on your area

What is the name of your region's Home and Community Care Support Services organization?

○ _____

6. Exploring the Healthline in your region

Each Home and Community Care Support Services organization has an online Healthline. This Healthline shares links to local health and community services.

Let's learn more about the Healthline in your area.

- click on this webpage: <https://www.thehealthline.ca/>
- look at the list and click on your area
- explore what types of health services are available
- click on one topic you would like to know more about

Write down the name of the topic you learned more about:

○ _____

7. Support organizations for caregivers

Support organizations help families impacted by different health conditions.

A great example is the Alzheimer's Society of Ontario. They support families impacted by dementia.

One section of their website is for caregivers. It's called: *"I'm caring for a person living with dementia"*.

Tasks:

- Click [here](#) to go to the *"I'm caring for a person living with dementia"* webpage.
- Scroll through this webpage. Read about the helpful topics listed.
- Locate the topic called "Finding Suitable Activities". Click on this topic.
- Under this topic, find two activities that can be done with people with dementia. Write down the names of these activities.
 - _____
 - _____
- Discuss dementia activities with your teacher or classmates. You could talk about things like:
 - Have you ever done any of these activities with someone with dementia?
 - Are there other good activities for people with dementia?

8. How to support a caregiver video

The Ontario Caregiver Organization (OCO) has many helpful resources. We showed you some of their resources earlier.

The OCO also has a [YouTube channel](#) with many good videos to help caregivers.

- Watch Cathy's video on how to support a caregiver:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gxvY9p4asDk>
- List two things Cathy says people can do to support caregivers.
 - _____
 - _____
- Discuss how family, friends, or co-workers can support caregivers with your teacher or classmates.

For Practitioners Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework Competencies, Task Groups, and Level Indicators

Unit 5 – Finding Support for Your Family and Friends – and for Yourself!

- Question 1 – A1.2, B2.2, D.2
- Question 2 – B2.2, B3.1b
- Question 3 – B2.2, D.1
- Question 4 – A1.2, B1.2, B2.2, D.2
- Question 5 – A2.1, B2.1, D.1
- Question 6 – A2.2, B2.1, D.2
- Question 7 – A2.2, B1.2, B2.1, D.2
- Question 8 – A3, B1.2, B2.1, D1

Skills for Success: Communication, Digital, Reading and Writing



Unit 6 – Family Caregivers and the Skills for Success

Caregivers have many different roles. They do a great variety of tasks. Through these roles and tasks, caregivers gain many skills. These skills are helpful at home, work, and in the community. In this Unit, we talk about the importance of skills. And we introduce the Skills for Success.

In 2021, the Government of Canada introduced an update to its Essential Skills model. The updated model is called the [Skills for Success](#). The Skills for Success are the everyday skills Canadians need for work, learning, and life.

The 9 Skills for Success are:

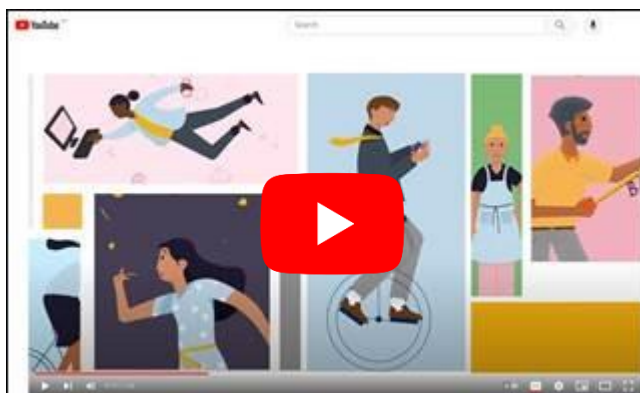
1. Adaptability
2. Collaboration
3. Communication
4. Creativity and Innovation
5. Digital
6. Numeracy
7. Problem Solving
8. Reading
9. Writing



All nine Skills for Success are used by family caregivers!



[Click here](#) to watch a short video created by the Government of Canada called "Discover the Skills for Success".



Adaptability skills

Adaptability is being able to change and adjust when things change around you.



To learn more, watch this one-minute video on **Skills for Success – Adaptability**:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wlnQudMe1C4>

The life of a caregiver requires a lot of adaptability. Here are some ways that caregivers might use adaptability skills.

- A caregiver's mother is now blind. The caregiver re-organizes the house to make everything more accessible. For example, the caregiver moves all the most useful dishes in the kitchen to the lowest shelf. This will make the dishes easier to reach. The caregiver calls the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB). The CNIB gives tips on how to make the house safer.
- A caregiver's son is diagnosed with autism. The son hates noise. The family adapts to make life easier for their son. They buy him a headset to shut out the noise. They reorganize the house to give their son a quiet space. They learn strategies to communicate better with their son.
- A caregiver's dad has dementia. At first, the dementia was mild. Now it has gotten worse. The caregiver must adapt and learn new ways to give support.
- A caregiver's wife has cancer. She likes the Personal Support Worker (PSW) who helps her. Now they learn that the PSW is quitting her job for a new position. The caregiver must adapt and find a new PSW.
- A caregiver's sister has a stroke. The sister often chokes when swallowing food. The caregiver must adapt. The caregiver starts to carefully chop the sister's food into very small bites. The caregiver adds sauces and gravies to make swallowing easier. The caregiver buys applesauce and puddings.
- The doctor tells a caregiver that his mother is no longer safe at home alone. The caregiver must adapt and develop a new plan to keep his mother safe.

For example...

Anita's father Sam will soon leave the hospital. Sam had knee surgery. He will need support with meals and household chores for 3 weeks. Sam lives alone but Anita helps him a few times per week. Anita also has a full-time job.

The hospital tells Anita that her father will have two hours of home care **each day**. However, when they get home, they learn that Sam only has four hours of home care **per week**. Homecare services will only help Sam with bathing. They will not help with meals or chores. Sam needs more help than that. Anita knows she and Sam will have to adapt.

Anita develops a new plan. Anita is busy at work, but she can bring Sam supper. Anita's niece agrees to come and stay with Sam for two days. That gives Anita more time to adapt to the situation. Anita texts her family and friends. She asks some to help with meals. Anita asks others to come and visit with her dad. With this plan, Sam will get the help he needs.

1. What else could Anita have done to help Sam? List one other way that Anita could adapt to this situation.

○ _____

2. How adaptable are you?

We learned that adaptability is being able to adjust when things change around you. Some people find it easy to adapt to change. Others find it hard. There is no right or wrong way. How do you handle change? Put a checkmark beside the answer that is most like you.

- A. When change happens, I don't mind too much. I can adapt easily.
- B. I don't like it when things change. But in a few days, I can adapt.
- C. I dislike change. I find it upsetting. It takes me a long time to adapt.

Collaboration skills

Collaboration means working well with other people to achieve a common goal.



To learn more, watch this brief video on the **Skills for Success – Collaboration**: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MB4Vc_xY360

The role of a caregiver is hard. Working together with other people makes the job easier. Here are some ways that caregivers use collaboration skills.

Caregivers might:

- work together with other family members to support elderly parents
- call the family doctor to share health concerns and develop better strategies
- contact mental health services to arrange for counseling for a friend in need
- create a schedule for each grandchild to call their grandfather once per month
- set up a private Facebook group for a group of friends to share ideas on how to support a friend who is ill
- link with their sister's long-term care home to provide better social support
- involve special education services at their child's school to get better services for their child with autism

For example...

Patti's neighbour Mike just had surgery. He was sent home to recover. Mike lives alone. Mike needs help for two weeks with meals. Mike has no children or family nearby. Patti wants to help but she cannot do everything. Patti needs a team.

Patti decides to bring Mike lunch every day for two weeks. Then she calls Meals on Wheels. They will bring supper to Mike for two weeks. Friends from Mike's synagogue want to help. They set up a schedule where different people will bring Mike breakfast.

By working together, Mike has a team to help him!

3. Write an email to your teacher about a time when you worked with other people to help someone. The email should be about three sentences long.

4. Working with other people has many benefits. Listed below are four of the benefits of collaboration.

Discuss these benefits with your teacher or classmates. Circle the benefit that you think is the most important. There are no wrong answers!

- A. When there are more people, the work gets shared.
- B. Different people bring different ideas. A group of people might find a better solution than just one person.
- C. Everyone brings different strengths to a group. When you work together, everyone can learn from each other.
- D. Working with others can build good relationships.

Communication skills

Communication is your ability to speak, listen and share information and ideas.



To learn more, watch this short video on the **Skills for Success – Communication**: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6wQvDhyE8xg>

Good communication skills are very important for caregivers. Caregivers need to communicate well with:

- the person they are caring for
- healthcare providers
- social service organizations
- family and friends

Here are some ways that caregivers might use their communication skills.

Caregivers might:

Email:

- send an email to friends reminding them of visiting hours at the nursing home

Text:

- text family members to give them an update on healthcare issues

Listen:

- listen to the fears and concerns of their family member about growing old

Ask:

- ask for ideas on a private Facebook group for caregivers

Write:

- write a thank you card to a healthcare worker

Meet:

- hold a family meeting to talk about how to support aging parents

Phone:

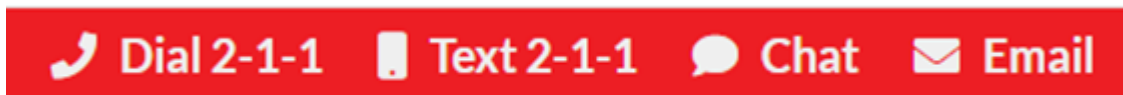
- call 211 Ontario to get information on community services



5. Communicating with 211 Ontario

211 Ontario is a great way to find community services. Caregivers can access 211 Ontario in different ways.

- Visit the 211 Ontario website at <https://211ontario.ca/>
- Look at the top of the 211 Ontario home page. It shows that you can contact them in these ways:
 - A. Phone
 - B. Text
 - C. Chat
 - D. Email
- Of the four choices, which way would you prefer to contact 211 Ontario? Circle your choice.



6. Write down two reasons why you would prefer to communicate with 211 Ontario in this way. Share your reasons with your teacher or classmates.

Creativity and innovation

Creativity and innovation mean you can imagine and come up with new ideas.



To learn more, watch this short video on the **Skills for Success – Creativity and Innovation**:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MQluystHU9c>

The role of a caregiver is demanding. Creative ideas make the job easier for the caregiver. They can help caregivers solve problems. Creative ideas can improve the quality of life for loved ones. Creativity can also bring more enjoyment to regular tasks.

Here are some ways that caregivers might use creativity and innovation:

- A family member has Parkinson's Disease. The family member chokes on regular food. A caregiver creates new recipes that can be made in a blender.
- A friend can no longer communicate due to a brain injury. A caregiver sets up a digital photo frame near the friend's bed. This photo frame scrolls through pictures. This reminds the friend of the people and places she loves.
- A family member with dementia is starting to forget many things. A caregiver creates a short booklet with family pictures and stories. The family member enjoys looking at the booklet every day.

For example...

Grace is a lifelong gardener. It has always been her favourite hobby. Now Grace is in a retirement home. She can't see well anymore. Grace also uses a walker. Grace is very sad to no longer have a garden.

Her son Eric has a creative idea. Eric asks the retirement home if they can buy raised garden boxes for the residents. That way, the seniors can still have a garden. The retirement home does not have the money to do this. Next, Eric talks to the high school shop teacher. The teacher has an idea. The shop class can build the garden boxes as part of their classwork.

Other students hear about this project. A few of them decide to volunteer. They help with planting the garden boxes. These students get volunteer hours for helping. The seniors enjoy having the students around.



7. What is art?

Many people think that art is something created by talented artists. They may think that they aren't artistic at all.

But that's not true. **Everyone** can create art! Art is something people create with their imagination. Click [here](#) to watch the video "What is art"?

The video talks about different types of art.

Send an email to your teacher.

- Tell them about one thing the video said was art.
- Tell your teacher whether you agree that this is art.
- The email should be about two sentences long.

8. Creativity and YOU!

You've read our examples of creativity. You've watched the video "What is art?" Now, what do you think? Can everyone be creative?

List two creative things you have done.

- _____
- _____

Discuss creativity with your teacher or classmates. What creative things have they done?

Digital skills

Digital skills mean your ability to use digital technology to find, create, and share information and content.



To learn more, watch this one-minute video on **Skills for Success – Digital Skills**:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7TD398YNaHs>

Caregivers use digital skills in many ways.

Digital skills can help caregivers to:

- learn about available services in their communities
- connect with health and social services
- learn about the disease or condition facing loved ones
- keep in contact with an ill family member or friend
- share information with other family members
- access support for themselves

Caregivers might:

- search the internet for information about a health condition
- participate in a webinar to help caregivers deal with stress
- join a private Facebook page to get support from other caregivers
- hold a social Zoom meeting with an elderly parent
- visit the [Health811 website](#) to get information
- search their library's website for resources to support children with autism
- read posts on the Ontario Caregiver Organization's [blog](#)
- watch a YouTube video on supporting people with dementia

For example...

Arif is a new caregiver for his brother Max. Arif wants to learn more about caregiving so he can do a good job. He wants to learn online. Arif finds the website of the [Ontario Caregiver Organization](#). Arif is happy to see that their website offers different ways to learn online. These include:

- webinars
- podcasts
- YouTube videos

9. Living Safely in the Community video

Videos are a great way to improve your skills as a caregiver. Click [here](#) to watch the “Living Safely in the Community” video. This video gives tips to help people with dementia. It was created by the Alzheimer’s Society of Ontario.

List two things mentioned in the video that would help people with dementia live more safely in the community:

- _____
- _____

10. Staying social video

The “Living Safely” video talks about how important it is for seniors to stay involved in social activities. Search [YouTube](#) for a video about helping seniors to stay social.

Send an email to your teacher. Tell them the name of the video. Also, tell your teacher one thing you learned from this video.

Numeracy skills

Numeracy means you can work with and understand math.



To learn more, here's a short video on **Skills for Success – Numeracy Skills**:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dZrDsI3oSJc>

Caregivers use math skills in many ways. Caregivers might:

Manage money

- compare the cost of protein drinks at three stores
- calculate which meal delivery service is the most cost-effective
- calculate the cost of buying a walker using a 20% off coupon

Manage time

- plan a schedule for 10 hours per week from a Personal Support Worker
- track blood pressure levels twice per day
- calculate how many sick days they've used at work to take a family member to medical appointments

Use measures

- measure the correct dose of medication
- compare how many grams of sugar there are in three different types of cereal
- measure a dresser to see if it will fit in a small room at a retirement home

Manage data

- record a person's temperature every 4 hours and log it in a chart
- count out the needed amount of pills each day
- create a chart to compare the costs for accommodation, food and services at 4 retirement homes

11. Comparing the cost of protein drinks

Tamara's aunt Toni needs better nutrition. Toni must drink a protein drink daily. Toni is on a limited budget and protein drinks are expensive. Tamara must figure out the best deal for Toni.

Look at the table below. Calculate the cost per unit for a protein drink from these three stores. Then decide which store has the best price.

Cost of protein drinks	Price	Cost per unit
Store #1	6 protein drinks = \$14	
Store #2	8 protein drinks = \$17	
Store #3	12 protein drinks = \$23	
Which store should Tamara buy Toni's protein drinks from?		

12. Make more muffins

Michelle's son Billy has a swallowing disorder. He often chokes. Billy needs to eat soft food. He loves soft applesauce muffins. Michelle needs to double the recipe to have more muffins ready for Billy.

Double the ingredients of Michelle's applesauce muffins:

Original quantity	Double quantity
2 cups of flour	
2 teaspoons of baking powder	
$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon of salt	
1 egg	
1 and $\frac{1}{2}$ cups of applesauce	
$\frac{1}{4}$ cup of butter	
$\frac{3}{4}$ cup of oil	

Problem Solving Skills

Problem solving means you can find solutions when things go wrong.



To learn more, here's a short video on **Skills for Success – Problem Solving Skills**:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=He6yQNNiDI4>

Caregivers are often experts at problem solving. It can seem like one problem after another happens. Things often don't go as planned.

Here are some examples of caregivers and problem solving:

- A good plan was in place. Everything was working well to support aging parents to stay in their home. Then, the father falls and breaks his hip. Everything has now changed for the worse. The caregiver must solve a new set of problems.
- A sister with Alzheimer's has been doing well at her retirement home. The disease is in its early stages. Now the retirement home says the sister is forgetting how to get back to her room. The sister is also getting angry and upset with everyone. The caregiver wonders, "*Will I have to move my sister to a nursing home?*" The caregiver will have to find a way to solve this problem.
- A family has a daughter with Down's Syndrome. Their daughter goes to high school. She is very happy there. This is her last year of high school. The parents are worried. How will they keep their daughter happy and busy once school is over? Their daughter would be very sad at home. Her health could get worse. Their daughter wants to work. But she needs extra support. This makes it harder to find jobs. The family will work together to solve this problem.
- Most of the family agrees that their mother is no longer safe at home. They think she needs better care. They think their mother should go to a nursing home. One of the siblings does not agree. This sibling is angry and shouting at everyone. This sibling wants the mother to stay in her home. The caregiver hates to see the family fighting. The caregiver isn't sure how to solve this problem.
- A family doesn't have enough money to pay for counseling for their teenage son. Their son has a serious mental health issue. Things are getting worse. There are long waiting lists for free counseling. Their son needs help NOW. These caregivers are worried. They need to solve this problem as soon as possible.

13. Problem Solving – A job for Maria

A family has a daughter with Down's Syndrome. Her name is Maria. Their daughter goes to high school. Maria is very happy there. This is Maria's last year of high school. The parents are worried. How will they keep their daughter happy and busy once school is over? Maria would be very sad at home. Her health could get worse. Maria wants to work. But she needs extra support. This makes it harder to find jobs.

The family, with Maria's help, thinks of ways they could solve this problem. They all want Maria to be active in her community once high school ends. Maria has a lot to offer!

Here are some of their ideas. Which of these four ideas do you think is the best? Put a checkmark beside your answer.

- A. Maria could start with volunteering. She could gain new skills. She could make new connections. Maria would still be involved in her community. Volunteering could make it easier to get a job later.
- B. The family could contact Community Living Ontario. This organization helps people with Down's Syndrome. They might have good ideas for Maria.
- C. Maria could go to Employment Services. They help people find work. They could help Maria too.
- D. The family could email their friends and other family members for ideas. Their friends and family might have different ideas. Maybe one of them will even have a job for Maria!

14. Write down two reasons why you think your choice is the best way to help Maria get a job. Share your reasons with your teacher or classmates. Remember! There are no wrong answers.

- _____
- _____

Reading skills

Reading is your ability to understand written words.



To learn more, here's a short video on **Skills for Success – Reading**

Skills: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AXMrzQlak3I>

There are many different types of things caregivers might read.

Caregivers might read:

- instructions on caring for a wound
- prescription labels
- a brochure about social activities for their elderly dad
- emails from family members
- tips sheets on how to care for someone with dementia
- a flyer about a program for children with autism
- home safety tips
- health information on a website

For example...

Tim and Sara's daughter Lisa is 9 years old. Lisa has just been diagnosed with type 1 diabetes. Tim and Sara are worried and upset. They want to get reliable information about this disease. They want to know what they can do to help. Tim and Sara visit the website of Diabetes Canada. They find a section of the website called "[Kids & Type 1](#)".

This website is very helpful. Tim and Sara find many resources to read. The website has information such as:

- caring for a child with type 1 diabetes
- getting support
- recipes for people with diabetes

Now Tim and Sara feel more able to better support Lisa.

15. Reading is many things

Think about things you have read recently. People read many different things. Reading is not just about books! Have a look at this list. Circle the items that you have read recently. If your answer is not on this list, write it down under “other”.

- recipe
- Facebook post
- poster
- email
- book
- holiday card
- post on Instagram
- advertisement
- something on the internet
- rent receipt
- map
- other: _____

16. Write down one thing you learned from something you have read recently. (For example, “*I learned why clowns have red noses*”).

Writing Skills

Writing means you can share information and ideas using words and sentences.



To learn more, here's a short video on **Skills for Success – Writing Skills**:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BmTzVNhSRZ8>

Caregivers use their writing skills for many different reasons.

Caregivers might:

- take notes during a visit with the doctor
- send a text to update family members
- post on Facebook to update friends
- write an email to a retirement home asking about rates
- make a list of questions to ask the doctor
- write a thank you card to a healthcare worker
- write in a journal

For example...

Janna is a caregiver for her mother Ally. Ally has cancer. Janna is very worried and tired. Janna knows she should do something for herself. But she has so little free time.

Janna decides to create a “mini” journal. Each day, Janna writes down two short sentences. One sentence is about something good that happened that day. It could be something small like seeing a beautiful sunset. The second sentence is about one good thing Janna did that day. Janna’s journal helps her to relax. It helps her think of good things.

Here is what Janna’s journal looks like:

January 1st

A. There was a full moon tonight

B. I went for a long walk today



17. Two good things

Pick one day this week. Like Janna, write a short sentence about one good thing that happened. Then write another short sentence about one good thing you did. It can be on any topic. It doesn't need to be about caregiving.

One good thing that happened this week was:

○ _____

One good thing I did this week was:

○ _____

18. The Skills for Success and YOU!

So now we've learned about the nine Skills for Success. They are Adaptability, Collaboration, Communication, Creativity and Innovation, Digital, Numeracy, Problem Solving, Reading, and Writing.

Now let's think about how you could improve one of these skills. Write your ideas in the chart below. Discuss it with your teacher.

My Tasks	My Ideas
Choose one of the nine Skills for Success that you would like to improve.	
List two ways you could improve this skill.	
Talk with your teacher to get their input.	
Write down two things you will do in the following month to improve this skill.	

For Practitioners
Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework
Competencies, Task Groups, and Level Indicators

Unit 6 – Family Caregivers and the Skills for Success

- Question 1 – **Adaptability**: Helping Sam adapt (**B2.1**)
- Question 2 – **Adaptability**: How adaptable are you? (**A1.1**)
- Question 3 – **Collaboration**: Working with others to help (**B2.2, D.1**)
- Question 4 – **Collaboration**: The benefits of working together (**A1.2, B1.2**)
- Question 5 – **Communication**: Communicating with 211 Ontario (**A1.1, D.1**)
- Question 6 – **Communication**: Preferred ways to communicate (**B1.2, B2.2**)
- Question 7 – **Creativity**: What is art? (**A3, B2.1, D.2**)
- Question 8 – **Creativity**: Creativity and YOU! (**B1.2, B2.1**)
- Question 9 – **Digital**: Living Safely in the Community video (**A3, B2.1, D.1**)
- Question 10 – **Digital**: Staying social video (**A3, B2.1, D.2**)
- Question 11 – **Numeracy**: Comparing the cost of protein drinks (**A1.1, C1.2**)
- Question 12 – **Numeracy**: Make more muffins (**A1.1, C3.2**)
- Question 13 – **Problem Solving**: A job for Maria (**A1.2**)
- Question 14 – **Problem Solving**: What's the best way to help? (**B1.2, B2.2**)
- Question 15 – **Reading**: Reading is many things (**A1.1**)
- Question 16 - **Reading**: One interesting thing you learned (**B2.1**)
- Question 17 – **Writing**: Two good things (**B2.1, B4**)
- Question 18 – **Writing**: Skills for Success and YOU! (**B1.2, B2.2, E.1**)

Unit 7 – Ways to Reduce Caregiver Stress

Seven Stress Reduction Tips

It's not easy to be a caregiver. Many caregivers feel overwhelmed and stressed. In this Unit, we share seven ways to help reduce stress.

1. Stay connected

Caregivers need to stay connected to their family and friends. Caregivers are busy and often don't have a lot of free time.

It can be easy to let weeks or even months go by without connecting with friends or family.

Set time aside each week to connect with your family or friends. It doesn't have to take a long time. You could do simple things like:

- get together with a friend for coffee
- go for a walk
- chat on the phone
- have a video call on Facebook
- go to the mall with a friend
- game online with your brother

If you are part of a faith community or a community group, try to stay connected. It may not be easy. For example, maybe now you can only go to a service club meeting once per month, instead of every week. But going even once a month will help you keep connected.

Staying connected will give you strength and support. It will help you feel less alone. It will give you a break and reduce stress. Also, people can better support you if they know what you are going through.



2. Ask for help

Caregiving is hard. You can't do it all. Most people need help to care for loved ones. But caregivers can often find it hard to ask for help. As well, family and friends may not know what help you need.

It is helpful for caregivers to think about the **specific** help that they need. Help can look like many things. It will be different for every caregiver.

You could let people who care about you know that you are having a hard day or week. Or maybe you are having a hard month! You could let them know that you need extra support for your loved one or yourself. They can't help you if they don't know.

Here are some examples of ways people could help caregivers:

- baking fresh muffins for breakfast
- delivering a hot meal for supper
- going with you to a medical appointment
- researching support for caregivers in your community
- spending time with the person you are caring for, such as:
 - reading to them
 - going for a walk
 - having a friendly visit
 - doing a puzzle together
 - helping them with technology

Think about the sort of help you need. Then ask for help with **specific** tasks. Here is an example.

I am feeling very overwhelmed. I need your help. Can you please:

- *drop off supper for us this week*
- *come over on Tuesday and visit with my mom for two hours*
- *help my dad set up his new cell phone*
- *go for a walk with my sister on Sunday*
- *watch the hockey game with my husband on Saturday*

3. Take time for yourself

Caregivers need to take time for themselves. This can be hard to do, but it is very important. It doesn't have to take long or cost money. It can be a short break. But it must happen regularly. Caregivers need to have things to look forward to.

Taking time for yourself could look like this:

- going for a 20-minute walk each day
- having coffee with a friend twice per week
- having a ZOOM call with your sister every Sunday
- spending two hours each week on a hobby you enjoy
- visiting the library every Saturday morning
- working in your garden three times per week

Taking time for yourself will help you feel less overwhelmed. It will give you the strength to continue caregiving. And it will reduce your stress levels.

4. Find helpful resources

Find good resources to help you! We shared many of them in Unit 5 of this resource. Review Unit 5 for good ideas on how to get help.

Support is out there. You don't have to do it alone.

For example, the Ontario Caregiver Organization has many helpful resources for caregivers on its [website](#).

Watch their “Caring for the Caregiver: Promoting Your Own Mental Health” video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nAo4M7tWRwc>



5. Take care of your health

It is easy to forget our own health when we are caring for the health of others. But your physical and mental health matters too.

It's important to:

- get enough sleep
- eat healthy food
- have regular check-ups with your doctor
- take care of your mental health
- get some regular exercise (even going for a short walk each day is important for your health)

6. Share your feelings

Find trusted ways to share your feelings about caregiving. Sharing your fears and challenges can reduce stress. It can make your situation feel more manageable. It can make you feel less alone.

This could include:

- joining a support group
- talking to your family doctor
- getting a counsellor
- talking with a trusted family member or friend
- writing in a journal

7. Be realistic about your situation

It is important to be realistic about how much you can do as a caregiver. It is important to learn how to adapt when things change.

Think about things like:

- How much care does your loved one need? Can I do that?
- Can I stay physically and mentally well with the amount of care they need?
- If I need help, where can I get it?
 - Family and friends?
 - Community support?
 - Support from health and social services?
- Can I stop doing some things and learn to say NO?
 - No, I'm not cooking the family Thanksgiving dinner this year
 - No, I can't volunteer this year
 - No, my house isn't going to be perfectly clean this year
- How can you adapt to make your situation work better? What could you **STOP** doing? What could you **START** doing?
 - I could **stop** bringing supper over to my brother each night. I could get Meals on Wheels to do that.
 - I could **stop** volunteering at the weekly community breakfast program. I used to enjoy it. Now that I am a caregiver, I find it stressful.
 - I could **start** bringing my Mom to an adult day program for people with dementia twice per week.
 - I could **start** asking for help. I could ask my friend to visit my Dad once per week for two hours. I could ask another friend to bring over supper twice per month.

Your Turn: Tasks

1. Which tip was the most helpful to you?

In this Unit, we shared these seven tips to reduce stress:

- stay connected
- ask for help
- take time for yourself
- find helpful resources
- take care of your health
- share your feelings
- be realistic about your situation

The most helpful tip to reduce stress was:

- _____

2. Write down two reasons why this tip was the most helpful to you. Share your reasons with your teacher or classmates.

3. Go to Tip #1 – “Stay connected”. What were two ways that caregivers could stay connected?

- _____
- _____

4. List two ways you stay connected with your family or friends. Discuss this issue with your teacher or classmates.

- _____
- _____

5. Asking for help

Do you find it easy or hard to ask your friends and family for help? Circle your answer.

- Easy
- Somewhat easy
- Somewhat hard
- Hard

In Tip #2 – “Asking for help” we saw that it is useful to tell people about a specific way to help you. Write down one thing you wish a friend or family member would help you with.

- _____

6. How do you take time for yourself?

It's important to take time for yourself. It helps to reduce stress. This is true even if it's just a short break. List two ways you take time for yourself. Discuss this issue with your teacher or classmates.

- _____
- _____

7. Supporting your mental health video

Watch the video “Caring for the Caregiver: Promoting Your Own Mental Health”:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nAo4M7tWRwc>

Write an email to your teacher. Tell your teacher about three ways to support mental health that were talked about in the video.

8. Creative Journalling

Writing in a journal is often a good way to reduce stress.

Writing a journal can seem like too much work. But there are ways to keep it simple. For example, to record their caregiving journey, people can create a daily:

- **nature journal** – write down one thing they saw in nature
- **music journal** – write the name of one song
- **picture journal** – post one photo
- **gratitude journal** – write one thing they were grateful for

Think of a simple journal you could create to record your thoughts. Write down how you might do this. And remember, there are no wrong answers!

- _____

9. Adapting when things change

Adaptability is being able to change and adjust when things change around you. For caregivers, things are always changing! In Tip #7 we talk about being realistic about your situation. We talk about things you could **stop** doing and things you could **start** doing to make things work better.

How could you adapt and make your caregiving situation better? Write one thing you could **start** doing differently as a caregiver. Then write one thing you could **stop** doing.

For Practitioners
Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework
Competencies, Task Groups, and Level Indicators

Unit 7 – Tips to Reduce Caregiver Stress

- Question 1 – **B2.1**
- Question 2 – **B1.2, B2.2**
- Question 3 – **A1.1**
- Question 4 – **B1.2, B2.1**
- Question 5 – **B2.1**
- Question 6 – **B1.2, B2.1**
- Question 7 – **A3, B2.2, D.2**
- Question 8 – **B2.1, B.4**
- Question 9 – **B2.2**

Skills for Success: Adaptability, Communication, Creativity and Innovation, Digital, Reading, Writing

Conclusion

We hope you learned a lot from our **Learning Toolkit for Family Caregivers**.

Remember that what you do matters! Remember that help is out there. You aren't alone on this journey and there are many resources to help you.

The work done by caregivers is very important. Laubach Literacy Ontario wants to thank you for being a caregiver or for supporting caregivers.

