



The Serenity Connection

Caring for Your Loved Ones in Greater Victoria

CAREGIVER PROFILE



Our caregivers are totally committed, highly qualified and carefully selected individuals who are personally and thoroughly screened, bonded and insured.

Most importantly our caregivers are dependable and extraordinarily caring of others. In addition to their previous experience, our caregivers receive continuous training that includes a specialized curriculum exclusive to Serenity Home Care that results in them becoming Certified Companion Aides™. These highly qualified and trained caregivers are ready to help you and your loved ones with a variety of daily activities such as:

- Caring companionship
- Meal planning and preparation
- Incidental transportation
- Running errands
- Light housekeeping
- Medication reminders
- Assistance with bathing and grooming
- Assistance with bill paying
- Information and referral services

Our personalized and affordable services are available 7 days a week and can range from a few hours a day to 24 hour and live in care.



Welcome to the Fall 2012 Serenity Connection

Congratulations to “Caregiver of the Season”, Marilee Davies!

Tired of retirement, and on the lookout for something meaningful to do with her time, Marilee found exactly what she was looking for at Serenity Home Care — interesting clients with fascinating stories to share, emotional connection and, in her own words, “a broader perspective on the continuum of life.”

Marilee has three clients — June, Joan and Susan. Each client has specific interests, needs and care requirements. Because Marilee works with the same clients week after week, they’re able to develop deep, connected and meaningful relationships that enrich her life as much as the clients’ lives.

Marilee picks up her 94-year-old client, June, from the hairdressers: “Are you up for an adventure?” she asks. “Lead the way!” June replies. Their weekly afternoon adventures include a range of activities June enjoys. They might take in an exhibit at the Ocean Discover Centre in Sidney; stroll through Beacon Hill Park in full-bloom; or eat lunch at the Cordova Bay Golf Course (June was an avid golfer, and while she doesn’t get out on the links much these days, she enjoys spending time in familiar territory).

Marilee also has a client named Joan. At 90 years old, Joan is fit, healthy and, with the help of a walker, mobile. Like June, Joan no longer has her driver’s license.

Weekly outings with Marilee give Joan a sense of freedom, a chance to get out and about — go for a drive, socialize, people-watch at the Oak Bay Marina, chat over coffee — or do practical errands like doctors appointments, grocery shopping or trips to the post office.

Marilee’s third client is Susan. Susan has a degenerative hip problem and her son, Mike, is her primary caregiver. Marilee provides support to Mike by coming in and cooking meals for Susan three days per week. Having Marilee’s help makes a big difference for both Mike and Susan.

Whether she’s adventuring with June or Joan, cooking meals for Susan or sending an email to update their family members, Marilee cherishes her clients and the stories they have to tell. Thanks again for all your work, Marilee!

Serenity Home Care
www.serenityhomecare.ca



**Murray Tough
Kathy Tough**

Owners,
Serenity Home Care

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FINANCE & CONSUMER RESOURCES

Shopping on a Fixed Income

Over the course of the last two years, grocery prices have been going up at a rate of about 7-9% — a whole lot more than most people's incomes have been going up, fixed or not. This means learning how to shop in ways you might not have considered before.

Cutting Grocery Costs

Plan your grocery shopping trip.

It's a simple fact. When we impulse shop, we always buy differently than if we plan the trip and stick to the plan. Running to the store for a half dozen items costs more, than if we shop once or twice per week and make it a longer but more comprehensive trip. Plan your meals so that you can work them around fewer ingredients.

Create a list.

You are much more likely to stick to what you need when you have a list than if you don't. No list means you are likely to buy based on what looks good rather than what your budget, diet, and common sense will advise.

Eat a snack or lunch before you go.

There's a reason why food looks good when you buy it at the store. It's supposed to. And if you are hungry, this appeals to your desire to buy it even more. If you shop after you've had a good meal, you will be more resistant to impulse buying.

Study sales cycles.

Most foods go on sale about every 10-12 weeks. Around major holidays such as Victoria Day, Labour Day, Canada Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas, these cycles are shortened. Look for sales on turkeys near Thanksgiving, and hams for Easter and Christmas. Steaks go on sale for summer holidays, and you can get some great deals on corned beef around the 2nd week of March. These cycles also exist outside of holidays. Look for sales and stock up.

Use coupons, but look out.

Every buying guide tells you how much money you can save with coupons. They are right, so long as you would buy that

item and brand with or without a coupon. If it is still more expensive than you otherwise would spend on a different product or you wouldn't buy it at all, the coupon has hurt your budget, not helped it.

Shop the perimeters.

The stuff that makes up most of your budget and that you plan your meals around like bread, veggies, meat, and dairy are on the sides and back of your supermarket. Shop these areas first, find the savings, and then workout the rest of your budget from there. Studies show that when people get the stuff they need first, they are less tempted to buy the prepackaged convenience stuff in the center of the store.

Don't shop in front of your face.

The most expensive and popular items are generally at eye level. More frugal options are generally above that level and near the ground. This isn't always the case, but it is often enough to make worth noting.

Convenience foods.

We all know these are easier, but we also know that it costs time and money to produce and package convenience foods. Pre-cut veggies and meat, peeled and mixed fruits, premade salads, and other convenience foods are more expensive than if you do it yourself. Get your card. Many supermarket chains carry a discount card. Get one and use it to save some serious money.

Buy bulk stores.

It might pay to shop bulk stores like Costco using a bit of strategy. If you have friends with the same tastes, agree to buy certain items and divide them up. A few storage bags can help you cut your food costs by as much as 40%. Also consider cooking around certain items. You won't want enough spaghetti sauce to feed 20, but use it for that first, then convert the remainder into chili and freeze part of that for later. Finally, it might pay to buy it, use most of it and throw away the rest. This is particularly true with spices you use a lot. You can often get a full pound of a spice for the same price you can get for an ounce of it in the supermarket.

So if you only used up half the container, you've still come out money ahead.

seniormag.com/headlines/shopping-fixed-income.htm



ROTATING TOPIC

Addressing Clutter Issues

Clutter is a common issue among seniors. It is a problem certainly not exclusive to seniors, but there are a number of reasons older people in particular find clutter a challenge in their lives.

Older seniors from the Depression era grew up with a "scarcity" mind-set that can lend itself to an accumulation of possessions. This can go equally for the empty tube of tooth-paste that they think they can get one more brush from, to the knick-knack aunt Sophie gave them in 1948. They may also buy multiples of the same item when they are on sale, and not really have the room to keep them, contributing to stacks of clutter around the house. Additionally, if a senior is already hampered by issues of depression, memory loss or anxiety, tackling the mountains of normally disposable "things" that come with everyday life, such as magazines, newspapers, junk mail — even bills, can quickly become overwhelming, and the piles just stack up. And in many cases, chronic clutterers are not willing to admit they have a problem. Seniors can associate giving up items they have had for years with the end of their lives, so it is an issue they prefer not to face.

"People don't want to acknowledge there is a problem," said Dr. Catherine Roster, a University of New Mexico clutter researcher, "which creates an underlying anxiety, stress, guilt or embarrassment that can have a negative effect on their mental health and productivity." Those negative

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SENIOR HEALTH & LIFESTYLES

Hospitalizing a Loved One with Dementia: “Common Pitfalls” — #2 in Dementia Series

Be aware of the following common pitfalls during hospitalization, so you can take steps to prevent them:

1. Delirium.

Delirium is a state of acute mental confusion. People with dementia develop delirium at much higher rates than typical hospital patients. It's often missed by hospital staff, however, because they don't know what's normal for that person. There are many possible causes of delirium. In a hospital setting, common triggers are a hospital-acquired infection or complications from surgery. Many hospital techniques meant to manage a confused patient may worsen confusion, including the use of restraints, tranquilizers, and sleep aids.

What you can do: Know the signs of delirium, and make sure the hospital staff is aware of a sudden change in mental status as soon as possible. Make sure that pain is being adequately treated. Pain can trigger delirium. Work to keep your loved one oriented and calm. Gently orient your loved one with reminders: “Here we are, still in the hospital for that operation, Dad.” “You're in a hospital bed to have your heart checked.” A familiar blanket or favorite picture from home and a cheerful plant can also be calming.

2. Accidental falls.

Someone with dementia may already be unsteady due to coordination problems. Disorientation can also cause the person to forget where he or she is, and get out of bed the wrong way or bump into unfamiliar furniture or walls on the way to the bathroom, and take a tumble.

What you can do: Have someone by the person's side as much as possible so that they can be there to assist when he or she moves about. Issue reminders every time the person gets up: “Here, let me help you because you have those stitches on your side.” Bring hospital slippers that fit securely on the feet, rather than easy-on (and, unfortunately, easy-off) scuffs that can contribute to tripping.

3. Undertreated pain.

Although families often worry about their loved ones being overtreated with pain medication in the hospital, the opposite is more likely to be true in older adults with dementia. This is because it can be hard to gauge pain levels in someone who's confused or can't communicate well. Many people worry that by asking for relief, their loved one could become addicted to painkillers; this is almost never true for people with no history of substance abuse.

What you can do: Stay close to your loved one during the hospitalization so that you can monitor for symptoms of pain, including moaning during sleep, frowning or other expressions of discomfort, wincing when moving a certain way, favoring certain positions, or complaining of pain (even if it's later forgotten by the person). Report pain to hospital staff on your loved one's behalf. You know what's normal for your loved one better than anyone else, and what looks like discomfort.

4. Overused urinary catheters.

Bladder catheters are often needed at the start of a hospitalization to drain the bladder, but they're often left in for longer than is necessary. This raises the risk of infection. Because the catheter is attached to a drainage bag, having one reduces the patient's mobility, which can make hospitalization less comfortable and can slow recovery. Someone with dementia may forget the catheter is in place, adding to confusion and discomfort.

What you can do: Ask the doctor and nursing staff every day if the catheter is still needed. For men who need a urinary catheter, ask if a condom catheter can be used. They also may reduce the chance of bladder infections, provided the patient doesn't pick at the catheter too much.

5. Constipation.

Constipation can develop in the hospital for several reasons. It's a side effect of many painkilling medications, which may be given during hospitalization. Also, the person's normal routines for eating and drinking, moving around, and yes, voiding, are all thrown off during a hospital stay.

What you can do: Let the nurses and doctors know if your loved one isn't having a bowel movement at least every other day, or if you see any other signs of constipation, such as abdominal pain, nausea, bloating, cramping, or a loss of appetite, along with poor stool production. Know that there is a range of safe laxative options for treating constipation.

2nd of an 8-part series

Leslie Kernisan, M.D.

Paula Spencer Scott

<http://www.caring.com/articles/6-common-pitfalls-dementia-hospital>

effects can be as much physical in nature as emotional. With falls being one of the primary health hazards for the elderly, the danger of a fall increases dramatically with a cluttered household, where piles of paper often reside on the floor, across tables and even at the base of stairs. Basements with old papers and boxes of possessions can be both a mold and fire hazard. And a cluttered household often means the inability to find vital paperwork, whether that be important medical records or the utility bill. The following are signs to watch for in a senior's lifestyle that indicate a clutter problem emerging: piles of mail and unpaid bills; difficulty walking safely through a home; frustration trying to organize; difficulty managing activities of daily living; jammed closets and drawers; compulsive shopping; difficulty deciding whether to discard items; loneliness.

If you recognize your loved one has a clutter issue, here are some suggestions to address the problem:

- Attach a monetary value to possessions. Get estimates for possessions from a local antique dealer or compare prices for comparable items on Ebay or Craigs List. Money can be a great inducer to declutter the home.

- Keep it in the family. Letting family members take a remembrance or keepsake is a great way to preserve the legacy, especially if the elder family member can see something valued and put to use.

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SERENITY SUPPORTS THE VICTORIA HOSPICE

Celebrate a Life this Holiday Season

The holiday season is supposed to be about the joy of celebrating with friends and family, but it can also be a difficult time for those who have lost a loved one. That's why each year, a few weeks before Christmas, Victoria Hospice provides opportunities for local residents to pause and remember someone dear to them. This year, you can honour your loved one at special displays in the Fairmont Empress Hotel, Hillside Mall, and the Bay Centre (see dates below). Simply drop by, write a name or personal message on a tribute ornament and hang it on one of the trees. There is no charge, although donations in

support of Victoria Hospice patient care and programs are gratefully accepted. In addition, Victoria Hospice is hosting its annual Memorial Service at the UVic Interfaith Chapel, December 16 at 3PM. All are welcome. Celebrate a Life at the following locations this holiday season:

- The Fairmont Empress Hotel Festival of Trees, Nov 20 - Jan 4
- Hillside Mall Celebrate a Life display Dec 1 - 12
- The Bay Centre Celebrate a Life display Dec 13 - 28



Victoria Hospice

Tom Arnold

<http://www.victoriahospice.org>

When to Ask for Help

Serenity Home Care presents a free seminar for caregivers and for people who are concerned that someone they love may need care. Topics include:

- Top 10 indicators that someone needs help.
- Signs of caregiver burnout
- Tips for being a caregiver

Nov 24, call for time and location



SPOTLIGHT ON CAREGIVERS

4 Ways to Resolve Sticky At-Home Care Financial Issues

Figuring out household finances can become a real sore point for family caregivers. After all, having someone living in your home raises the cost of basics, like food and utilities. And if multiple family members help care for a loved one, it can be challenging to track who paid for what.

Here are some ideas that can help:

1. Call a family meeting to establish big-picture principles.

When it comes to money issues, it's important to lay the cards — including the credit cards — on the table, with all the relevant parties involved. Work out a general approach to spending that everyone can get on board with. Once a year, hold a special meeting to address big expenses coming up, such as a new roof or a faltering washing machine.

2. Keep a receipt box.

If multiple caregivers are involved, tracking expenses is critical so that nobody later complains of spending more than his or her fair share. Have a clearinghouse system in which all receipts — for medication and drugstore supplies, medical co-pays, hairdresser appointments, and so on — are deposited in one place, with the payer's name indicated. Some families find it

useful for one member to track individual spending on a spreadsheet.

3. Work out a single rent check.

Track bills for a month or two and compare them to life before your loved one moved in. Come up with a single figure that includes proportional amounts for electricity, heat, food, and other basics. This eliminates dickered over individual bills every month, while allowing your loved one to feel as if he or she is contributing. (It works in reverse if younger family members move in with an older generation.)

4. Set up payment systems.

Another approach is to decide together on a general system for how bills are to be paid. Some families choose to use one credit card for medication, another for supplies or food, and so on. If your loved one insists on writing checks, look into having another family member's name on the account. In the event the person becomes too ill or disabled to physically write checks, access to this account won't be lost.

Paula Spencer Scott, senior editor
Carol O'Dell, contributing editor
<http://www.caring.com/articles/home-care-financial-issues>

• Don't rush the process. For many, starting is the hardest step, so be encouraging and organize the overall project into attainable steps. Create a "to do" list of tasks that you both agree upon, and begin with the easiest steps so they will see progress being made.

• Develop a schedule. Creating a realistic time-line for completing the tasks for the project is a good way to make the process seem less overwhelming and more achievable.

• Keep on top of new clutter. Help your loved one create processes to make sure new clutter does not develop. Assist them with these tasks as they come up.

• Consider hiring an objective third party. You might be too close to help. A Professional Organizer might be more effective at assisting your loved one. Consult the National Association of Professional Organizers to find one near you.

Caren Parnes, *The Senior's Choice*