Petro-Canada CareMakers Foundation™

Caregiver Conversation Starter



Caregiving is a part of life for millions of Canadians and, at some point, many of us will either provide care for a loved one or rely on someone for support ourselves. While these conversations can feel difficult, talking about caregiving early can help families better understand each other's wishes, plan ahead, and navigate future challenges with greater confidence.

How to use this document:

Use these conversation starters to begin meaningful discussions about caregiving with the people in your life. Whether you're currently a caregiver, may need care in the future, or support someone who does, these questions are designed to help you explore needs, preferences, and plans together.

Who is a family caregiver?

A family caregiver is someone who provides ongoing, unpaid support to a family member, partner, friend, or loved one who is living with a physical disability, chronic illness, mental health challenge, age-related need, developmental disability, injury, or other condition requiring regular care or assistance. **A family caregiver can also provide care for their chosen family**: people who are not related by blood, marriage, or legal ties, but who have developed close, family-like relationships and provide meaningful love, support, and care.

Emotional Well-Being and Relationships

a) **Who would you want involved in important decisions about your care or the care of a loved one?**
Clarify who should be included in conversations and decision-making if circumstances change.

b) **What are your biggest hopes or concerns about receiving or providing care in the future?**
Create space for open, honest conversations about fears, expectations, and priorities.

c) **What would help you feel most supported?**
Discuss preferences around emotional support, companionship, independence, and maintaining quality of life.

Physical Care

a) **Have you thought about who you would trust to support you if you ever needed care yourself, or if you became a caregiver for a loved one?**
Talk about who feels comfortable taking on different caregiving responsibilities and what support they might need.

b) **What kind of care would help you maintain your independence?**
Discuss potential needs related to mobility, transportation, personal care, meal preparation, or health management.

c) **What would a typical day look like if you needed additional support?**
Consider routines, activities, social connections, and the level of assistance that would feel right.

Planning and Support Resources

a) **Have you talked about the practical, emotional, phycological, social, and financial impacts of caregiving or needing care?**
Discuss how caregiving could affect daily routines, relationships, emotional wellbeing, stress levels, mental health, work responsibilities, finances, and the types of support that may be needed.

b) **Are there important plans, preferences, or documents you should understand now?**
Talk about care preferences, decision-making wishes, emergency plans, and any important documents or information that could support future care planning, such as wills, powers of attorney, healthcare directives, and other planning resources.

c) **What support systems could you lean on?**
Explore support available through family, chosen family, friends, neighbours, community organizations, workplace benefits, healthcare providers, and professional caregiving resources.

Visit **caremakers.ca** to access additional resources, information, and support for caregivers and their loved ones.

Start the Conversation Today

Every caregiving journey begins with a conversation. Use these questions to start meaningful discussions with the people in your life about caregiving needs, preferences, and future plans. As you continue these conversations, consider connecting with trusted professional supports, such as healthcare providers, mental health professionals, legal professionals, financial advisors, workplace benefits specialists, and community organizations who can help guide caregiving decisions and future planning.