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# Free series offered for area caregivers

**LISA TALLYN**  
Staff Writer

Being a caregiver for a loved one can be overwhelming and stressful, however, a four-part free series offered in Georgetown starting next week can help caregivers cope and realize they are not alone.

The series is offered by Acclaim Health (formerly VON Halton) Wednesday, April 4, 11, 18 and 25 from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. at the Super Centre, 171 Guelph St. Registered nurse Tish Butson will be the facilitator.

It is for caregivers taking care of spouses, family members or friends.

"It can be someone who is caring for a loved one from the home or from a distance," said Mary Schnurr, program co-ordinator. She explained, for example, a caregiver could be someone who goes daily to see someone living in a facility.

"We want to provide support for the caregivers and help them learn coping skills," said Schnurr. She said support is needed so they can continue on in their role of caregiver.

"It's all focused on the caregiver, that is sort of a different perspective."

The sessions focus on how caregivers can reduce their stress, stay in control of their lives, handle guilt and anger, and find community resources.

Louise Marjerrison of Acton, a caregiver for the past 14 years for her husband Gerry, who has an inoperable brain tumor, attended the sessions a couple of years ago and says she can't recommend it enough for other caregivers.

"If anyone is thinking of going I would tell them to get themselves over there as fast as they can," said Marjerrison.

"It was very good to meet other people that were in somewhat the same situation. I found out there were different services available if I needed to draw upon them," she said.

The sessions made her realize "other people were out there fighting battles also," she said.

She added she didn't attend the sessions to find a friend but that is exactly what happened. Through the sessions she became good friends with another woman, who is also a caregiver. They have been a good support for each other.

There are only 20 people maximum in the groups and Schnurr said while the main purpose of the sessions is education, the members, who are all experiencing similar situations and emotions, do support each other.

"They help each other through real-life scenarios," said Schnurr. "They feel, I'm not alone, I'm not isolated."

"We try to get through to the caregiver they have to maintain a certain balance in their lives."

Tips are offered and the participants take part in role-playing and exercises to help them reflect on their lives.

"We ask people a lot of open-ended questions, there's a lot of brainstorming. It's very informal, non-threatening," said Schnurr.

Books and handouts are also provided, and a representative from the local Community Care Access Centre will be a guest speaker at a session on available community resources.

"Most people don't really know all that's available," said Schnurr.

She said some previous participants in the sessions have called them "life changing."

Anyone interested in attending must pre-register by calling Schnurr at 1-800-387-7127 ext. 2319 by Tuesday, April 3.



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