

Stay Connected

Individuals who are frail, ill or mobility impaired may enjoy the beautiful fall colours, but shorter days and impending bad weather are often responsible for a gloomy outlook. As the fall approaches, caregivers might want to plan for the dreary weather ahead, both for themselves and for their loved ones.

Social isolation can have a profound effect, increasing the likelihood of depression or simply sapping energy and life force. Belvedere Community Support Services offers opportunities to enjoy meals in a congregate setting, provides safety and security checks, offers a friendly visiting service, as well as arranging for accessible transportation. It's well worth checking out their numerous programs to see whether something would fit your loved ones' needs. Faith groups often have active volunteer programs that may speak to your loved ones' interests and are well worth calling to see what programs they may offer. Adult Day Away programs offered through *The Friends* provide social activities, outings, a hot meal and an opportunity to chat with friends. These programs have the added benefit of providing the caregiver with some "alone time".

Caregivers might wish to explore whether their loved one is comfortable with technology. The ability to explore internet resources, communicate with far flung friends and family can ease loneliness and increase "connectedness". Some seniors are more willing to explore than others, however, making technology a success that means devoting some time to help familiarize the new user with both the software and hardware. Check with the local library for volunteer programs that teach seniors how to effectively use the net. You may even be able to locate a student willing to support your loved one on their journey to technological achievement. Remember to choose keyboards that have large, easy to see key pads and ensure that the equipment is located in a convenient, easy to access space.

Stock up on crossword puzzles and books. If eyesight is a challenge, check out the local library for books on tape and large print editions.

In addition to local rehabilitation services through the Community Care Access Centre or the West Parry Sound Health Centre, organizations like the Arthritis Society can provide practical help with assistive devices or strategies to minimize infirmity.

Seeking out support by networking with other caregivers can also provide insight, strategies and a shoulder to lean on in difficult times. Monthly support groups are held for family caregivers, people with Parkinson's, MS and recovering from stroke and their family members. All are welcome to attend these informal free sessions. Assistance may be available if you need respite or transportation to attend. For times and locations, contact 1-888-746-5102.