

[TRACK 2: INTRODUCTION]

Narrator: Robert O'Gorman

[John]

When my wife, Susan, was diagnosed with breast cancer we both went in to shock. I felt angry and scared, but I didn't think I should burden her with my feelings.

[Elena]

When the doctors told us that there was nothing more they could do for my husband's cancer, we knew that we needed to find information to help us move forward.

[Sandra]

Our group of friends has become like an extended family. So, when Jean needed help, we all pitched in.

[Mary]

After my husband was diagnosed with cancer and after his surgery, he wanted me with him all of the time. Over time, I stopped doing many of the things I enjoyed so much and began to feel more and more isolated.

[Mei Ling]

My husband had just been diagnosed with lymphoma. I have two young children, a full-time job, and I am providing care for my 82-year-old mother-in-law. I was stretched about as far as I could possibly go.

[Brian's Father]

The day Brian was supposed to start his chemotherapy, he told his mom and me that his nurse

talked to him about sperm banking. He said he needed to do this before he started his chemotherapy. His mom and I were afraid that if we delayed his chemotherapy, it might affect his chance of being cured.

[Katie]

My son's doctor sat me down and said, " There are many people here to help you. Just tell us what you need." I will always be grateful for what she told me, and the way she said it. It made me realize that I could turn to other people to help give my son the care he needed.

[Grace]

I kept telling myself that taking care of Joe was more important than going to a wedding. But, I love Sharon like a daughter. I just felt so sad about not being able to be there on her special day.

[Narrator]

Welcome to the Cancer Survival Toolbox program entitled "Caring for the Caregiver." This program is different from the other programs in the Cancer Survival Toolbox because it focuses on caregivers; that is, persons who give rather than receive care. It is meant to help family members, friends, or anyone else who has the sometimes difficult task of caring for someone who has been diagnosed with cancer.

"Caring for the Caregiver" is just one of a series of Cancer Survival Toolbox programs. There are also programs on communicating, finding information, making decisions, solving problems, negotiating, and ways to stand up for your rights. In addition, there are other "special topics" programs like ones on finding ways to pay for care and living beyond cancer, as well as programs on different types of cancers. You can listen to or read these programs online at www.canceradvocacy.org/toolbox; you can also download the audio files from iTunes.

The Cancer Survival Toolbox comes with a free Resource Booklet, also available at

www.canceradvocacy.org/toolbox. Resources and organizations related to each Cancer Survival Toolbox topic are included.

Now, let's talk more about the topic of this program, caring for the caregiver.

[Narrator]

Throughout all of the programs in the Toolbox, you will hear the term "cancer survivor" used instead of other terms, like "cancer patient" or "cancer victim." This is an important point, because we define a survivor in the following way: from the time of diagnosis and for the balance of life, a person diagnosed with cancer is a survivor. Another important point to remember is that you, as a caregiver, are also a survivor. Although you may not have had cancer yourself, you, too, are surviving the challenges, responsibilities, and life-changing effects of this disease and its treatment. We hope this program will help you understand how important it is to take care of yourself - to take care of your own needs. Linda, an oncology social worker, has an important perspective on the impact of cancer survivorship on caregivers.

[Linda]

It is easy to become overwhelmed while caring for someone. Have you ever felt like everyone simply expects you to know automatically what to do, how to do it, where to go, and what questions to ask? This is probably an entirely new experience for you. You, too, have to learn about and adjust to all the complications of a disease that is threatening the life or the health of the person in your care. Here's a passage from Ross Gray, a Toronto psychologist, that describes the frustration with his caregiving role - I share this with caregivers I work with. "I have run a gamut of feelings over and over. Anger at the impact of illness on our lives, anger at my loved one for needing so much from me, sadness at her pain and my helplessness to take it away, guilt that I am not there for her enough of the time, guilt about my own desires to escape. This is tough stuff. Anyone, who has to care for someone over the long-term, can hardly help getting worn down, even bone weary, from the emotional turmoil."

[Narrator]

Maybe you have felt some of these same feelings - or all of them - at one time or another. The challenge is to learn how to balance the needs of the person you are caring for with your needs.

[Narrator]

In order to find this balance, you first need to identify both the limitations and the strengths that you bring to this situation. Limitations may include high medical bills and not enough money; juggling a job with the care of children and an ill person; or your own poor health. Strengths may be an extended family that can help with everyday tasks; a generous employer who allows flexibility in your job; or a strong faith that helps to sustain you.

[Narrator]

Once you identify these limitations and strengths, you can then develop a plan of action that best cares for and nurtures everyone involved, including yourself. We hope this program for caregivers will help you by strengthening the following basic skills:

1. Communicating - so that you can express your own needs and feelings, and be able to listen to the needs and feelings of others;
2. Finding information - so that you can better understand the disease and treatment, and also find the resources and support you need to care for yourself along with others;
3. Making decisions- so that the burdens of care can be shared, and you decrease the chances of feeling overwhelmed or burned out;
4. Solving problems - so that you are able to adapt to the changes brought about by cancer, and realize that you may need to tap into help outside of the family unit;
5. Negotiating- so that you can work toward reaching agreements that work best for everyone; and
6. Standing up for your rights - being able to ask for those things that you need. Let's begin with the first skill, communicating, by listening to John.