

SCHEDULING TIME FOR PLAY

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Vince Gowmon is the founder of Remembering to Play Events and a Certified Professional Life Coach. Vince was one of three presenters who spoke at our May 12, 2012 Family Caregiver Forum and Celebration at Vancouver General Hospital. All his life he has loved playing, and since 1998, Vince has lived his other passion of supporting others to create their life with joy and purpose. Remembering to Play Events is his opportunity to combine the two, giving people a playground to discover their authentic self and laugh along the way! The following is an excerpt from a follow-up interview with Vince conducted by Sarah Galuska, Coordinator of the VCH Caregiver Support Program.

SG: *From your perspective as a life coach, how important is play and what role can play have in the lives of family caregivers?*

VG: Unfortunately, play can easily get set aside. Play is something we think is for children and not for us adults, but it's actually something we need to make a priority and keep it in the forefront of our minds. Play is not just something that we do down the road, but something we have to continuously incorporate as part of our day to day lives. It becomes a practice, like any other practice we may have incorporated into our lives, like meditation or yoga. Play is even more critical for caregivers since they are continuously putting out and giving to others. Having a kind of visual structure or something around all the time that visually reminds caregivers of play might help caregivers incorporate it in their lives (i.e. a guitar out in the open if someone's passion is playing guitar or pictures of beautiful places taped up around the house to serve as a reminder for someone who finds renewal in spending time in nature to actually take a break and go for a walk).

SG: *When you speak about play in relation to caregiving, what are you referring to exactly?*

VG: It is important to note there are two kinds of play that I'm referring to. There is play with the person you are caring for and then there's the play you experience for yourself. I think both kinds of play are important. When it comes to having time to play and do fun things for yourself, it's important for caregivers to create mini-retreats for themselves. We think of holidays as something we do when we take off for one or two weeks, but really what we need are more regular mini-retreats. For example, these retreats can be having time to read or time to garden, but it's making sure you create time for fun and make it a priority! All of the things we schedule are things that are obligatory, like taking a family member to a doctor's appointment. But somehow, we don't schedule play time. What often happens is that caregiving runs the lives of caregivers, instead of caregivers running their own lives. In other words, caregivers have to become assertive with their time. We have to be willing to create strong boundaries about where we begin and where we end. We also have to be conscious about that fine line of actually giving to something and it beginning to take from us.

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CURRENT PROGRAMS & SERVICES

Education & Workshops
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Community Presentations

SCHEDULING TIME FOR PLAY

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SG: *What would you suggest to a caregiver who says they would like to have more play in my life and time for fun, but they just don't have the time?"*

VG: The first thing is to look at what you are currently doing in your life and assess how you schedule your list of priorities. What are the things that you have to do, what are the things that you can delegate or get other people to do, and what are the things that you don't need to do. The goal is to become conscious about the choices you are making. Some of the choices we're making are not conscious. Someone might say, "I'll play with you later, but first I have to do the dishes," but people don't really take a moment to ask themselves, "Do I really need to do the dishes right now?" or ask, "Do I need to get the whole house cleaned today?" When you really sit down and think about it, ask yourself, what are the implications of believing this to be true, and what impact is that having on me and the people around me? You could get the whole house scrubbed clean from top to bottom, but in the process, really push your body's physical abilities and burn out. Instead, try to:

1. **Question your beliefs - Is that the truth? Do I really need to do that?**
2. **Know what you do want to do. - If it is not the truth, what do I want to do?**
3. **Be intentional in the impact of your choice – How do I want to feel by making this choice, and what impact would I like to have on others and how they feel? Does my choice lead me and others to more joy, relaxation, peace of mind?**
4. **Make supportive choices – what do I need to let go of to get to do what I want; where do I need to ask for help / delegate?**

SG: *Some caregivers may feel guilty about allowing themselves to have fun, but then they end up neglecting their own self-care. Is there a way around this dilemma?*



VG: Intertwined with feelings of guilt, there is often this dysfunctional belief that says, "for me to truly serve this person, I have to be equally as unhappy as them". It's holding onto the belief that I can't allow myself to laugh or have fun because the person I'm caring for is laughing less. It's the belief that I have to make myself like the person I'm caring for, or make myself like how I perceive the care recipient to be. But this is quite a dysfunctional way of thinking. What I personally believe is actually the opposite; we cannot truly serve this person if we are not doing things that make us feel good. The better we feel, the more we can bring to the caregiving relationship. There is a saying, "You can't give away what you don't have."

SG: *There is a lot of discussion in our caregiver support groups about the importance of self-care. If someone were to say, "Vince, I'm willing to set aside time for myself and to have more joy in my life, but I don't know what to do or where to begin," what might you suggest?*

VG: The first thing is to understand what does 'play' mean to you. To help you, try journaling or writing down a list of all the things that you used to do that were fun. Activities such as gardening, specific hobbies, or sports might be some of the things on that list. Alternatively, you could list all the things that you've wanted to do but haven't. If answering those questions are too difficult, it might be easier to make a list of what used to bring you joy, or what used to feel like fun. You can draw from the present or past, but try to write as many things out as you can. After writing the list, circle 2 or 3 things on your list that immediately jump out at you as things you could do right away. If there are ones that are bigger goals, like travelling, you can choose a couple, one or two, that you would like to do in 6 months from now or even 1 year from now. You can have immediate goals or long term goals, or a combination of both if you like. After choosing two or three to focus on, begin to explore what doing those activities would actually look like.

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VG: For example, if you chose gardening as one activity, imagine what it would be like for you to garden. Would you build a garden from scratch? Would you dig out the back yard? Does it mean you start by buying a couple of pots? Do you join a community garden? The objective of this exercise is to dream up possibilities for this idea and begin to be specific about what that looks like for you as an idea. Once you've done that, the next step is deciding to take an action step towards that goal.

For example, maybe you go and buy plants, draw a map of how you want the garden to look or where to plant certain seeds, or get your hands dirty from the start and attack the overgrown weeds in one area of the garden. What's important is that you make sure to schedule that time in your calendar to do the action. And if something comes up that conflicts with the schedule, you learn to say, "Sorry, I already have plans."

SG: *So holding that time in one's schedule is like holding an appointment with a cardiologist or some other medical specialist.*

VG: Yeah! You booked it in the calendar as 'me time'. Again, a part of it is looking at the current things that are draining your energy. Look at the things that you're doing that you don't have to do and add things that you do want to do. The things that drain people are the things they feel they have no choice around. Honoring our own needs and choosing to do the things we want to do ultimately gives us joy, more creativity and a sense of freedom.

To learn more about Vince Gowmon or subscribe to his e-newsletter, please visit www.rememberingtoplay.com

WORKSHOPS

PROTECTING YOURSELF FROM FRAUD AND SCAMS

Wednesday, September 19, 2012

10 am - 11:30 am

Evergreen Community Health Centre
(Northeast Room) 3425 Crowley Drive, Vancouver

This workshop investigates the ways in which people are taken in by schemers whose sole purpose is to rob them of their money or possessions. Seniors are frequent victims, and need to be aware of how to protect themselves. This workshop is geared for both caregivers providing care to someone who is a senior as well as for caregivers who are seniors themselves! *Hosted by the VCH Caregiver Support Program with guest speaker from the Council of Senior Citizens' of BC.*

Pre-registration required: caregiversupport@vch.ca or call 604-877-4650.

MEDICATION AWARENESS FOR CAREGIVERS

Wednesday, September 26, 2012

6:30 pm – 8:00 pm

Raven Song Community Health Centre (Room B3 / B4)
2450 Ontario Street, Vancouver

Many Canadians fail to take their medications as prescribed by their doctor. Caregivers are often given the difficult task of managing their family or friend's medications, but who can help in this process? Registered Pharmacist Sandy Posnikoff will provide an overview of pharmacy services and speak about the potential side effects of drug interactions and how to avoid the potential misuse of medications. Participants will also learn tips on how to optimize their relationship with their pharmacist and key questions to ask when prescribed new medications. *Hosted by VCH Caregiver Support Program.*

Pre-registration required: caregiversupport@vch.ca or call 604-877-4650.

EAST SIDE CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUP:**Renfrew Park Community Centre**

2929 East 22nd Avenue, Vancouver 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm

Upcoming Meetings: Tues., Aug. 14, 2012
 Wed., Sept. 5, 2012
 Wed., Oct. 3, 2012

CENTRAL VANCOUVER SUPPORT GROUP:**Raven Song Community Health Centre**

2450 Ontario Street, Vancouver 6:30 pm – 8:00 pm

Upcoming Meetings: Thur., Aug. 30, 2012
 Wed., Sept. 12, 2012
 Wed., Oct. 10, 2012

WEST SIDE CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUP:**Pacific Spirit Community Health Centre**

(3rd Tuesday of each month)

2110 West 43rd Ave., Vancouver 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm

Upcoming Meetings: Tues., August 21, 2012
 Tues., Sept. 18, 2012
 Tues., Oct. 16, 2012

**New
Dates!****Thank
You!**

Thank you to everyone who attended the May 12th Caregiver Forum and Celebration Event at VGH. The feedback was overwhelmingly very positive and we look forward to hosting another Caregiver Forum in May 2013. Congratulations to our eleven 2012 draw prize winners:

**Jessica C., Marilyn A., Felisa C.
 Marietta B., Valerie B., Margaret C.
 Shiraz N., Janice M., Christina J.
 Melanie M., Lois B.**

If you would like to submit an article, poem or be added to our mailing list to receive our free quarterly newsletter, please phone or send a written or e-mail request to:

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