

3. Keep in contact by phone (or email) if you can't be there in person, or in-between visits.
4. Do not offer too much help. Become familiar with the tasks that your loved one needs help/support completing and "offer your help" By offering, you are showing respect and sensitivity to the individual. At the same time, tasks that the individual is able to manage on their own, even if it takes a longer time to complete, should be encouraged and supported. This will reaffirm the person's sense of achievement and autonomy.
5. Seek medical or psychological help and advice if needed.
6. Build resiliency. Give your loved one the time and permission to mourn their loss, but also be there to help support/encourage them to move on at the appropriate time.
7. Seek out and make use of the resources in the home when you visit. This might include spending quiet or private time together, escorting your loved one to a home function or activity, or decorating their room with important items when planning a visit. Be creative in your visiting if possible.
8. Give yourself permission to look after yourself. The stress of being a caregiver can be fatiguing. You can only offer support to your loved one if you are feeling healthy and unstressed. Take time to look after yourself as well.

### **We take quality seriously**

As part of our ongoing commitment to quality, *E. J. McQuigge Lodge* is fully accredited by the Canadian Council on Health Services Accreditation (CCHSA).



CCHSA is a non-profit, non government organization that helps health service organizations across Canada examine and improve the quality of the care and services they provide for their clients. Health service organizations are assessed against national standards every three years.

Accreditation is consumers' assurance of quality care.

## Coping with Change and Loss



### Did you know?



Black Diamond Road  
Cannifton, Ontario  
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**Change: it's a natural part of life**

Significant events often mark a passage from one stage of life into another. Attending school, gaining employment, getting married, having children, buying a house, retiring, and moving into a long-term care home are all significant milestones in our lives. These changes can be either positive or negative experiences.

Current studies show that how a person perceives a change, rather than the change itself, is what can make the experience stressful. If someone sees change as a negative event, change can lead to a sense of loss, crisis or catastrophe.

**Defining loss**

Loss is the experience of parting with an object, person, belief or relationship that we value.

The experience of loss must be defined broadly and with a clear understanding of the personal pain and disruption that can accompany it. Losses can be minor or major, depending on how the person perceives the loss.

Loss can be tangible (actual or physical), such as a death, chronic illness, loss of a body part/physical abilities or changes in physical health. Or loss can be intangible and sometimes less obvious (psychological, or perceptions of prestige, power, dreams or plans).

**Aging: a process of adjusting to continual changes**

Significant changes that a person experiences may produce feelings of loss, grief, emptiness and sadness. These feelings may also involve feelings of anger and guilt. Such feelings are natural and normal given the experiences of change.

Often the person who is experiencing the loss, as well as the people around them, tends to deny or ignore these feelings. Sometimes there is a sense of not wanting to "upset the family" by beginning to talk about these feelings openly. Such denial can lead to additional emotional or physical difficulties such as increased physical complaints, rage, depression, anxiety, grief, guilt, loneliness, sense of helplessness, or being overly critical.

**Acknowledging the change and loss**

Successful aging depends on an older adult's attitude and ability to compensate for changes.

Most people who are experiencing the change as a loss want to talk about their feelings, concerns, fears, hopes and dreams. Even if these are expressed as "not working out the way that the person envisioned for themselves," there is value in being able to acknowledge these changes and what they mean for the person and the people around them, such as, family or friends.

In extreme situations, the individual or family will use more energy to avoid these conversations than would be needed for openly discussing them. This can lead to further physical or psychological issues.

By beginning the conversation, open communication might displace fears and myths that otherwise may not be talked about.

**Opportunities to regain control**

People who have coped successfully earlier in life usually continue to do so in later years.

Despite any limitations people have to cope with, open dialogue can help reveal areas where the individual can still be engaged, involved and autonomous taking charge and being in control.

**Supporting a more positive attitude about change**

Some simple common sense actions can help support your relative, and may even help you build a better relationship. These actions can help create an environment that is beneficial to both you and your loved one.

1. Actively listen to your loved one, and to what they are saying to you. If you need clarification on what is being said, use "open-ended" or "probing" questions that let the person know that you heard what they said, and you are interested in their point of view. These questions also invite the person to share more with you. A question such as "when you say you're out of sorts, what does that mean?" will allow your loved one to continue with the conversation.
2. Visit when possible. This will help reduce your loved one's sense of loneliness and isolation while remaining "connected" to important people in their lives.