

THE Mom & CAREGIVER™

AUGUST 2026
VOLUME 28 ISSUE 08

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A FREE
MAGAZINE

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CARING FOR
THE CAREGIVER 15

BACK TO SCHOOL
ANXIETY: SUPPORT
DON'T MINIMIZE 18

FINDING YOUR WAY
BACK TO YOURSELF ... 22



PREGNANCY - BABY - TODDLER



PRESCHOOL - SCHOOL AGE - FAMILY

The August Wiggles Are Real



By the time August rolls around, many parents notice a change. The excitement of summer is still there, but so are the signs of restlessness. Kids who were thrilled to sleep in and enjoy endless free time may suddenly seem bored, cranky, or full of energy they don't quite know what to do with.

It's completely normal.

Children thrive on a balance of freedom and structure. By August, the novelty of summer routines can start to wear off, and many kids begin craving new challenges, social interaction, and opportunities to learn and grow.

One of the best ways to help is by keeping children moving. Physical activity isn't just good for their bodies; it helps regulate emotions, improve focus, and boost mood. Family walks, bike rides, trips to the park, and backyard games are all wonderful options.

Dance is another fantastic outlet for those August wiggles. Put on some music and have

a family dance party in the living room. Challenge your child to create a dance inspired by their favorite summer memory or teach the family a routine they've learned at camp. Movement allows children to express themselves, burn energy, and build confidence all at the same time.

August is also a great time to start talking about the upcoming school year. Creating simple routines, practicing independence skills, and getting back into regular sleep schedules can help make the transition smoother for everyone.

Before backpacks are packed and schedules fill up again, take time to enjoy these final weeks of summer. A little movement, a little structure, and a lot of connection can help turn those August wiggles into happy memories that carry your family into fall.

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CONTENTS

EDITORIAL
The Two Sides of August

04

EVENTS CALENDAR
August 2026

05

ACTIVE LIVING
Minutes of Exercise!

06

FAMILY HEALTH
Smoke-Free Summer Fun

07

COMFORT CARE
One Last Hurrah

09

BIPOLAR ON THE BRAIN
Journal Entry #31

10

KIDZONE
These Are a Few of
My Favourite Things!

10

TMI
Act Your Age,
Not Your Shoe Size

11

OUR MENTAL HEALTH
The Great Outdoors

12

RAISING CALM
The Parenting Question
That Changes Everything

13

BIZ SHOWCASE
SnowPro Contracting

14

WHOLE-PERSON CARE
The Parallel Patient:
Caring for the Caregiver

15

MORTGAGE WHISPERER
Back to School Budget Reset

16

TALK WITH JEN
When Stress Lives in the Body

17

DAD-ITUDE
Back to School Anxiety:
Support Don't Minimize

18

CONFIDENCE STARTS HERE
Welcome to Yazdani Aesthetics

19

COUNTRY GIRL, MODERN MOM
What Caregiving Took From Me

20

ONE STEP AT A TIME
Helmet Therapy for Babies:

21

FROM SURVIVING
TO TRULY LIVING
Finding Your Way

22

ON THE COVER

Nine year old **Georgia**, or G as her mom called her, is a trooper! She doesn't like lemons yet bit into this one lots of times for the shoot. Her mom even dared to bite into one in support. They both agreed that heading for ice cream after the photo shoot was a great idea!



Publisher/Chief Editor
Assistant & Copy Editor
Graphic Designer
Photographer
Photostylists

Sabina Manji
Melissa Warkentin
Vlado Bali
One-12 Photography
Sabina Manji
Melissa Warkentin

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THE MOM & CAREGIVER is published by Anibas Productions Limited, Publications Mail, Agreement Number 40834037 PO Box 29118, London, ON N6K 4L9 www.themomandcaregiver.com

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THE TWO SIDES OF AUGUST

There are two sides to August. There's the fit-all-the-summer-things-in side, and there's the get-ready-for-back-to-school side. I prefer to focus on the first earlier in the month, but we're forced to combine it with the second as the month rolls on.

It's time to get the August wiggles out with ideas from Dance Extreme on page 2. Go on family walks and bike rides, play backyard games (cornhole, bocce, kubb and Kan Jam are popular at our house) or put on some music to dance. All of these are simple ways to make beautiful summer memories with your clan.

The Middlesex-London Health Unit talks smoke-free summer fun on page 7. Did you know? "In Ontario, under the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, 2017, it is against the law to smoke or vape in many outdoor areas, including around publicly owned sports fields and spectator areas, playground equipment, and where food and drink is served."

Once it's time to begin the back-to-school prep, our August pages continue to have you covered. Jayden's Mechanical reminds us to prepare our homes before the school bell rings (page 9). And dad, Jeremy, shares a very valuable article with Back

to School Anxiety: Support Don't Minimize (page 18). It's a reminder that who their teacher will be, whether they'll have friends in their class, and where they'll sit at lunch, may seem small to us, but are real, valid worries for your school-ager.

We also tackle an ever important topic on page 15: caring for the caregiver. When serious illness enters a family, both the patient AND caregiver are dramatically altered by the diagnosis. Dr. Kylea Potvin believes that the biggest challenge facing caregivers is not learning how to care for another person, it is remembering to care for yourself.

We wish you an August full of summer fun and family memories, combined with a smooth back-to-school preparation. **Plus, GET SNAPPING!** Our 21ST annual Captured Moments photo contest runs from August 5th to September 3rd (find details on page 8). We'd love to see your little one on one of our amazing covers!

PLEASE NOTE: We ran the incorrect *Whole-Person Care* article in our July issue. Please find the correct "The Parallel Patient: Caring for the Caregiver" in this month's issue.

PUBLISHER/CHIEF EDITOR

Sabina



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EVENTS

AUGUST 2026

Ribfest, Victoria Park,
[www.canadasbiggestparty.com/
london-ribfest](http://www.canadasbiggestparty.com/london-ribfest)

01ST

Make and Watch:
Spiderman (Teen), Crouch Library,
www.lpl.ca

06TH

JA Camp Startup Market,
Covent Garden Market,
[www.coventmarket.com/event/
ja-camp-startup-market](http://www.coventmarket.com/event/ja-camp-startup-market)

13TH

London Fiesta Extravaganza,
Victoria Park,
[www.allevents.in/london/
london-fiesta-extravaganza](http://www.allevents.in/london/london-fiesta-extravaganza)

15TH

WWE Summer Tour,
Canada Life Place,
www.canadalifepace.com

20TH

Airshow London Sky Drive,
London International Airport,
www.airshowlondon.com

23RD

Oxford Renaissance Festival,
Thorndale Fairgrounds,
www.oxfordrenfest.com

30TH

Happy
LONG WEEKEND!

Magic Show with
the Amazing Corbin,
Pond Mills Library,
www.lpl.ca

03RD

12TH

Courtyard Night Market,
100 Kellogg Lane,
[www.100kelloggane.com/
events/courtyard-night-mrkt](http://www.100kelloggane.com/events/courtyard-night-mrkt)

14TH

Curious Connections
(birth – age 6),
Children's Library,
www.lpl.ca

17TH

London Taco Fest,
Dundas Place,
www.stereocaliente.com/festivals

22ND

Bryan Adams,
Canada Life Place,
www.canadalifepace.com

29TH



THIS ONE'S FOR BONNIE

My mom's name was Bonnie Cope. August 11 was her birthday.

She played competitive softball. She volunteered at a local AIDS camp for kids. She fished, she camped, she showed up — for her community, for strangers, for causes bigger than herself. She was one of the earliest and loudest champions of LGBTQ rights in her circle. Bonnie poured into everyone.

Then she fell. Injured her shoulder. And slowly — the way it always happens slowly — she stopped moving. The diet slipped. The activity disappeared. Depression followed. A woman who once ran bases and fought for others spent her final years diminished by diabetes and a quality of life she deserved so much better than.

Small decisions. Enormous cost.

I became a nutrition and habit coach because of her. Because I watched what happens when a caregiver — a champion for everyone else — has nobody saying your turn, Bonnie.

This column is that corner for you.

If you're sliding — even slightly — start with two things this month. Find one movement you enjoy and do it twice this week. And eat one real meal a day built around protein and vegetables. Not perfect. Just consistent.

Bonnie deserved someone in her corner.
So do you.

Kevin Cope | Founder, The Cope Effect |
[@thecopeeffect](https://www.instagram.com/thecopeeffect)

In loving memory of Bonnie Cope.

“There is no such thing as a perfect parent, so just be a real one.”

Sue Atkins

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MINUTES OF EXERCISE!

The first two articles in this series were on numbers that require your health care provider to measure, namely blood pressure and A1C (reflecting diabetes). The third part was about a number that you can measure (BMI and waist circumference). The final article in this series is about something you can DO and measure as well - minutes of exercise performed each week.

Perhaps the greatest “plague” of our generation is our propensity to being sedentary. It is often said that being sedentary is “the new smoking.” Evidence does show that being sedentary is equivalent to smoking in terms of increasing risk for chronic disease such as heart disease and diabetes.

The Heart and Stroke Foundation and the Canadian Diabetes Association both recommend doing 150 minutes of exercise per week. This could be a half hour of a brisk walk five days a week. Activity that raises your heart rate is good for your heart, and to manage blood sugar, especially after meals. This could include walking, jogging, swimming and cycling. It is important to



incorporate strength training to lessen sarcopenia or muscle loss as we get older. Balance training can also help with fall prevention. It can be confusing with so many recommendations!

Fortunately, the Canadian Society of Exercise Physiology (CSEP) has beautifully presented guidelines divided by age on their website. They present the guidelines in categories of “sweat, step, sleep and sit”. Appropriate recommendations are presented by age category. These are presented on the website csepguidelines.ca.

Know your numbers! How long should you remain moderately active? How many steps should you take in 24 hours? What should be the maximum amount of time you should sit each day? How long should you sleep? Knowing your numbers can be the first step (no pun intended) to good health!

Dr. Bhooma Bhayana is a family physician in London and the mother of two young men and proud grandmother of three! She continues to find wonder and enjoyment in family practice despite more than 30 years on the job!



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SMOKE-FREE SUMMER FUN



Summertime means outdoor family fun in the fresh air. Cigarette smoke and vape clouds can hurt our health and make it less fun for those enjoying the beauty of nature. Second-hand smoke harms everyone. It can cause breathing problems, cancers and heart disease. Pregnant people, babies and children are the most vulnerable. Carbon monoxide from second-hand smoke easily passes through the placenta and affects young, developing lungs and hearts. Vape clouds are not harmless water vapours but instead are chemical aerosols that carry suspended particles and trace metals that can be inhaled deeply into the lungs. Beyond health concerns, when smoking or vaping is seen regularly, children and youth see it as usual, routine behaviour. Exposure to smoking and vaping in places where they play increases the likelihood of them starting to smoke or vape themselves. Ontario has laws to reduce smoking and vaping in many public spaces. These laws apply to both indoor and outdoor areas and

are in place to protect you and your family.

In Ontario, under the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, 2017, it is against the law to smoke or vape in many outdoor areas, including around publicly owned sports fields and spectator areas, playground equipment, and where food and drink is served. People who smoke commercial tobacco or vape in these areas may be fined \$305.

Cigarettes and vapes are not the only problem; cannabis and shisha (hookah/waterpipes) blended with tobacco produce harmful second-hand smoke too. Wherever it is against the law to smoke or vape, it is against the law to smoke or vape cannabis or to use a hookah to smoke tobacco shisha.

These laws keep public spaces safe for everyone. They protect you and your children from harmful second-hand smoke and vapour, and promote smoke-free and vape-free living to children and youth. If you see someone smoking or vaping where it is not allowed,

you can report it. Call or email the Tobacco Enforcement Team at the Middlesex-London Health Unit.

• 519-663-5317 ext. 2673

• smokefreeinfo@mlhu.on.ca

Visit www.healthunit.com for more information.

If you or someone you know want to quit smoking or vaping, please visit www.dontquitquitting.ca.

REFERENCES:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2024). Preventing Exposure to Secondhand Smoke in the Community. <https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/secondhand-smoke/community.html>

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Health Canada. (2024). Second-hand smoke. <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/smoking-tobacco/health-effects-smoking-second-hand-smoke/about.html>

HealthLink BC. (2024). Harmful effects of second-hand tobacco smoke and vapour. <https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthlinkbc-files/harmful-effects-second-hand-tobacco-smoke-and-vapour>

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Jacqueline Eckert, RN, Public Health Nurse,
Middlesex-London Health Unit

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ONE LAST HURRAH BEFORE THE SCHOOL BELL RINGS!

Is it just us, or did summer somehow hit fast-forward?

The Civic Holiday long weekend is often the unofficial grand finale of summer—a chance to squeeze in one more beach day, one more family barbecue, one more late-night campfire, and maybe even one more “Mom, can we have ice cream?” before the back-to-school countdown begins.

For parents and caregivers, August is a funny mix of emotions. We're soaking up family memories while secretly making mental checklists: backpacks, lunch containers, indoor shoes, activity registrations and somehow finding time to keep the household running smoothly.

While you're preparing the kids for September, don't forget about preparing your home, too. Before the cooler weather sneaks in, now is the perfect time to make sure your furnace and HVAC systems are ready for the busy season ahead. A little preventative

maintenance today can help avoid unexpected breakdowns when your family needs comfort most.

At Jayden's Mechanical, we know life doesn't slow down when summer ends—it simply shifts gears. Our goal is to help keep your home comfortable, efficient and worry-free, so

you can focus on cheering from the sidelines, helping with homework and making memories with the people you love.

Here's to one more summer adventure, a smooth back-to-school season, and a home that's ready for whatever comes next.



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JOURNAL
ENTRY #31

HOW TO OVERCOME YOUR LACK OF MOTIVATION!

I get asked, "Stephanie, can you help me with my lack of motivation?" I am just as human as you are. I don't want to do my yoga every night or my workout three times per week. I don't want to switch the laundry so that it doesn't stink the next day and I have to wash it over again. I don't love cleaning the bathroom. So how does my house stay so clean, my four dogs get walked, my bed is made every day, and the house has groceries in it just to name a few life non-negotiables? It isn't because I have more motivation than you. It's because I have learned the, "Either-Or Method." Let me explain.

Research shows that you make 35 000 decisions every single day! Webster's dictionary states that, "Motivation is like

Stephanie Preston creates videos on managing bipolar disorder. She is a Social Service Worker, Health Care Aide and suffers from severe bipolar depression herself. She loves being a grandma and is Crossfit obsessed. Follow her at www.tiktok.com/@bipolaronthebrain and www.facebook.com/bipolaronthebrain.

an incentive or driving force." Therefore, if we are making 35 000 decisions daily, you don't have a lack of motivation. You just aren't choosing the best decision at the moment. You need to decide what you can look forward to (incentive) so that you can live the life you want.

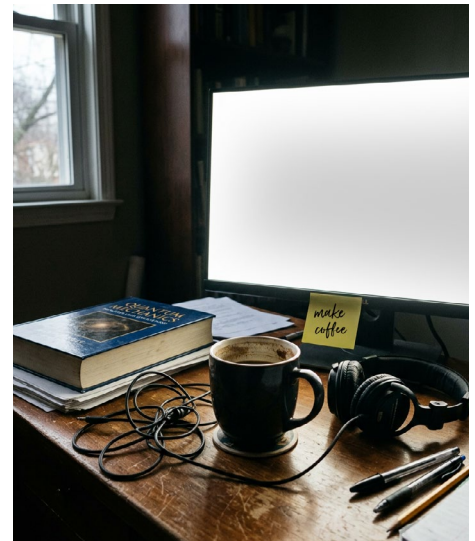
Some Either-Ors for me are:

1 Sticking to my 8 pm to 7 am sleep routine OR feeling exhausted and being unkind due to moodiness as a result of lack of sleep.

2 Knowing that digestion slows close to bedtime, I choose not to eat after supper OR snack on whatever, wishing I hadn't the next day because of the bloating I experience (usually I eat carbs for late night snacking - these calories will be stored as fat for sure!)

3 Taking my bipolar meds at 7 pm every night OR taking them whenever, which almost always triggers minor mania. The consequence is that I can't get to sleep as per my schedule and feel terrible the next day.

I challenge you to take this information very seriously. Take a piece of paper and write down your Either-Ors. You have 35 000 opportunities to change your life forever RIGHT NOW. I hope you see how beautiful a future you can have. It's time, my friend!



KID ZONE

LIFE AS A CHILD SEES IT

THESE ARE A FEW OF MY FAVOURITE THINGS!

What are your favourite hobbies right now?

Adi - Knitting and singing

Lander - MMA Brawl Stars

Do you prefer sports, arts or both? Why?

Adi - Both! I love art and I love soccer.

Lander - I prefer sports because they are more active.

What is something you're good at now that you weren't good at in the past - something you've really improved on?

Adi - I'm way better at soccer - I am way faster!

Lander - I've been training for MMA.

What's your favourite thing to do outside when your parents tell you to get some fresh air?

Adi - I like to walk the dog and go on bike rides.

Lander - I like to walk the dog and chop wood.

Meet our Kid Zone writers, 12 and 8 year old siblings, Lander and Adi! Each month, they'll be sharing perspectives on life as a child sees it.



ACT YOUR AGE, NOT YOUR SHOE SIZE



The older my daughter gets, the more confused I become. Not because she's changing. That's expected. It's because she looks like an adult. A fully formed, almost-adult human standing in my kitchen asking where the ketchup is while making direct eye contact with the ketchup.

Some days, I watch her navigate friendships, sports, school and social situations with more emotional intelligence than many adults I know. Other days, she leaves dirty clothes on the floor and seems surprised they didn't magically migrate to the laundry room. It's a wild contradiction.

As parents, we spend years teaching our children how to function in the world. We model responsibility. We encourage initiative. We explain consequences. We repeat ourselves approximately 47 000

times. Then one day they become teenagers, and suddenly you're expected to remember they aren't adults, despite evidence to the contrary.

Meanwhile, summer arrives... Which means I become an unpaid Uber driver, social coordinator, sports manager, travel agent, personal shopper, alarm clock and part-time financier of a lifestyle involving expensive snacks. The frustrating part isn't the work or the money. It's the expectation.

Because when your kid is nearly a foot taller than you, wears shoes three sizes larger than you, has a job, and understands politics and technology you're clueless about, it's easy to assume they should remember their game uniform. Or charge a phone. Or know what time we're supposed to leave every week.

And then, when my internal monologue starts sounding less than charitable, I do what every parent does after flipping my lid...I flip my seat. I remember that being a teenager is hard. They aren't adults. They're practicing. Their brains are still under construction. Their priorities are different. They deal with things we never did, like social media. They're figuring it out one forgotten cleat at a time. And maybe that's where the lesson lives.

Because "act your age, not your shoe size" isn't really advice for teenagers. It's advice for parents. A reminder that they are acting their age. And maybe our job isn't to expect them to have it all figured out. Maybe it's to remember that they're still figuring it out.

.....
Janet Smith is a proud mom of one daughter and a marketing professional who is grateful for her rural roots in the London area. Follow Janet's funny and honest journey at IG & TT / @re.marketable.janet or FB / @janetsiddallsmith

THE GREAT OUTDOORS

A hhhh - who doesn't love the warmth of the sun, the feel of a cool breeze and the sounds of birdsong? Nature is soothing for all, especially children. Some of my fondest childhood memories were when I was outside, biking from house to house, making forts out of leaves and sticks, and my favorite, playing Capture the Flag. Little did I know how important it was for my mental health.

Being outside can fundamentally improve a child's mental health because it:

- Decreases stress by reducing cortisol levels, the bodies primary stress hormone
- Reduces anxiety by lowering cortisol levels which reduces blood pressure and

negative thoughts, and triggers release of feel-good hormones like dopamine

- Increases serotonin release, a feel-good hormone which calms the amygdala, the stress center of the brain
- Improves focus by providing a sensory brain break which then improves executive functioning skills (focus, attention, problem solving)
- Fosters social and emotional growth by again reducing cortisol, increasing the release of feel-good chemicals like serotonin, which in turn improves self-confidence, empathy, cooperation and conflict resolution.
- Improves quality of sleep by releasing

serotonin and endorphins which regulate your circadian rhythm, your sleep cycle.

- Increases creativity by providing unstructured play and using multi-sensory materials such as sticks and rocks - because they lack a predefined use, they encourage creativity.

There are so many benefits to spending the daily recommended 1-3 hours enjoying the outdoors. Whether it is playing catch, going for a walk or tobogganing down a local hill with friends, all of these activities promote mental wellness for all, especially our little ones.



Becky Morrison is a Nurse Practitioner based out of Calgary who has specialized in mental health for over a decade. She is finally, after years of infertility, a mother of two busy little boys, and doting fur mom of her gentle giant, Stella. She is, and always will be, a strong advocate for mental wellness at all ages.



THE PARENTING QUESTION THAT CHANGES EVERYTHING

One simple question can help you sort through parenting advice with more confidence and less overwhelm.

Have you ever tried a parenting strategy that worked beautifully for another family... but didn't work at all for yours? You're not alone.

Parents today have access to more parenting advice than ever before. We can learn from books, podcasts, teachers, grandparents, friends and professionals. Much of that advice is thoughtful, well-meaning and incredibly helpful. So why do so many parents still feel overwhelmed? Often, it isn't because the advice is wrong. It's because not every parenting strategy is the right fit for every child. Each child has different strengths, challenges, personalities and needs. This is especially true for children who are neurodivergent or have higher support needs.

Over the years, one simple question has changed the way I support families, and I've seen it help many parents feel more confident in their own decisions. Instead of asking, "Will

this work?" ask, "Will this fit my child?"

That one question can change everything. Rather than feeling pressure to try every new idea, you begin looking for strategies that fit your child's needs, your family's values and your everyday life. The goal isn't to find the "perfect" parenting strategy. The goal is to find the right approach for your child. When parents make this shift, they often feel calmer, more confident and less overwhelmed. They stop comparing themselves to other families and start trusting what they are learning about their own child.

Good parenting isn't about collecting more advice. It's about learning which advice fits your child. The next time someone shares a parenting tip, pause and ask yourself, "Will this fit my child?" Because every child deserves strategies that fit who they are. And every parent deserves the confidence that comes from having a plan that truly fits their family.



Melanie Wallis
COACHING



Melanie Wallis is a Certified Parent Coach, Autism/ADHD Mom, and founder of Melanie Wallis Coaching. She helps parents of neurodivergent and higher-needs children create calmer, more connected homes through practical parenting strategies and personalized support. Visit melaniewalliscoaching.com to learn more.

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Each month we introduce you to a business that offers families in London and the surrounding area services or products you won't want to miss. 

SnowPro Contracting has been years in the making, even before the business officially existed.

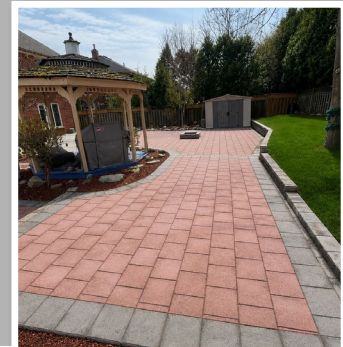
Christien, Victoria and Zack Bieg grew up in the industry, learning from their father and seeing firsthand what it meant to work hard, stand behind your word, and take pride in doing a job properly. Early mornings, late nights, snowstorms and long days on job sites were simply a part of life, and those experiences shaped the way they do business today. When it came time to branch out on their own, they took those lessons with them and built SnowPro Contracting around them.

Today, they are proud to be the founders and co-owners of SnowPro Contracting, a locally owned company serving London, Tillsonburg and communities throughout Southwestern Ontario. While the industry experience goes back generations, SnowPro is their opportunity to build something of their own and create a reputation based on quality work, reliability and strong relationships with customers.

They understand that when someone hires a contractor, they're putting their trust in them to take care of their property as if it were their own. Whether they're clearing snow before families head to work and school, or improving outdoor spaces during the warmer months, they take that responsibility seriously. When you hire SnowPro, you're not just getting a contractor — you're gaining a team that treats your property like their own. They show up. They deliver. They stand behind their work.

SnowPro Contracting is not interested in cutting corners or doing the bare minimum. They believe in showing up, doing what they said they would do, and leaving behind work they're proud to put their name on.

"Our story is still being written, and we're grateful for every customer, business and family that has trusted us to be part of it."



THE PARALLEL PATIENT: CARING FOR THE CAREGIVER

When serious illness enters a family, attention naturally focuses on the person who receives the diagnosis. Yet there is often another person whose life has been dramatically altered by the diagnosis. The caregiver.

In many ways, caregivers begin a parallel journey of their own. While they do not carry the disease in their body, they carry its consequences in every corner of their lives. Their days become organized around appointments, medication schedules, transportation, symptom management, financial concerns, household responsibilities and emotional support. Their nights are often interrupted by worry, caregiving tasks or the persistent fear of what tomorrow may bring.

When Courtney's husband Mike developed advanced kidney cancer in his forties, life changed overnight. Alongside the emotional devastation of watching someone she loved suffer, Courtney found herself navigating the practical realities of caregiving while raising

two young boys.

Looking back, Courtney speaks openly about one of her most important lessons: to advocate for herself. Like many caregivers, her instinct was to focus exclusively on her husband and family, her own needs secondary. Yet over time she realized that neglecting herself was neither sustainable nor helpful.

Courtney recommends turning offers of help into specific assignments:

- Take the children to school
- Bring a coffee and check in
- Pick up groceries
- Help with laundry
- Run errands
- Sit with the patient for an hour so the caregiver can rest or get fresh air

For a caregiver in survival mode, well-intentioned suggestions for self-care, like getting a massage or haircut, can feel impossibly large. A caregiver who is struggling to find five uninterrupted minutes

may feel defeated rather than encouraged by recommendations that require time, planning, energy, money or emotional bandwidth.

Courtney offers the wisdom of micro-goals: small acts of self-care that remain achievable even during the most difficult times:

- taking a shower that lasts 10 minutes instead of 2
- stepping outside for fresh air
- choosing a favorite snack at the grocery store as a statement that one's own needs still matter

These actions may seem insignificant from the outside, but each one communicates an important message: "I am still here, I matter, my needs matter." For caregivers who have spent months or years putting themselves last, these small moments can become powerful acts of self-preservation.

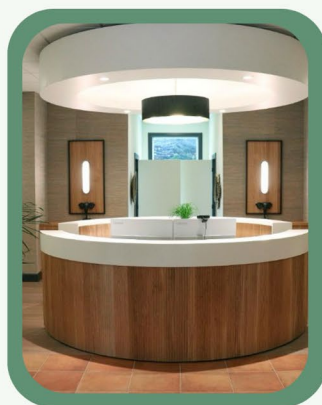
Perhaps the greatest challenge facing caregivers is not learning how to care for another person. It is remembering that they are a person worthy of care themselves.

.....
*Dr. Kylea Potvin, Medical Oncologist and Founder,
Eir Centre, 226-289-6644, Info@eirhealing.ca*



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BACK TO SCHOOL BUDGET RESET

As summer winds down, many families start preparing for a different kind of season.... back-to-school spending! September often arrives with a long list of expenses that can catch even the most organized households off guard. Taking time in August to reset your budget can help reduce stress and create a smoother transition into the school year.

For families with toddlers in daycare, September can bring significant costs beyond regular childcare fees. New clothing for changing seasons, indoor shoes, lunch containers, extra daycare supplies, activity fees and transportation costs can add up quickly. Consider creating a dedicated "September Fund" by setting aside small amounts throughout the summer. Shopping second-hand for seasonal clothing, organizing clothing swaps with friends and buying non-perishable supplies during sales can stretch your dollars further.

Parents of school-aged children often face a different set of expenses. School supplies, backpacks, technology requirements, field trips, hot lunches, sports registration, music lessons and after-school care all compete for space in the monthly budget. Before purchasing, review existing supplies at home and create a list of true needs versus wants. Buying in bulk with another family and spreading extracurricular registrations across multiple months can also help manage cash flow.

If you are a family sending young adults to college or university, September expenses become even more substantial. Tuition, books, housing, meal plans, transportation and technology purchases can create financial pressure. While savings and education funding can offset costs, some families may benefit

from reviewing their overall financial structure. In certain situations, restructuring a mortgage to improve monthly cash flow could provide additional flexibility during years of higher education expenses. Exploring options early allows families to plan proactively rather than react under pressure.

TIP: Make room in your budget not only for school supplies and extracurricular activities, but also for ongoing contributions to education savings. Continuing RESP contributions, even in smaller amounts, can help maintain long-term education goals while balancing today's expenses.

A back-to-school budget reset doesn't mean cutting out experiences, it means planning intentionally so September feels exciting instead of overwhelming. Contact me today for a customized Back to School Budget Reset Planner!



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WHEN STRESS LIVES IN THE BODY

A certain amount of stress can be helpful. It keeps us alert and able to respond to the demands of daily life. As parents and caregivers, stress can help us care for our families and navigate busy schedules. However, when stress becomes constant and we do not have opportunities to recharge or process what we are feeling, it can begin to affect our wellbeing.

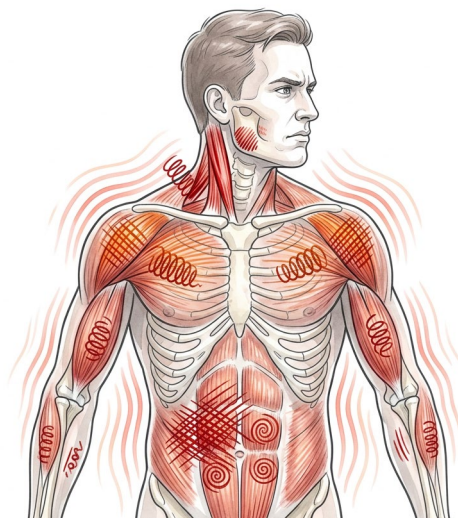
Stress often shows up in the body before we recognize it in our minds. It may appear as headaches, muscle tension, stomach aches, disrupted sleep or difficulty concentrating.



We might notice ourselves feeling restless or overwhelmed without understanding why.

As a therapist and a mom, I pay attention to the ways stress shows up in my own life, too. One of the first signs for me is irritability. When I find myself less patient than usual, I pause and reflect on what might be contributing and ask, "what exactly am I feeling, and why?" Acknowledging the emotions underneath the irritability allows them to move through rather than live in the background. I have learned that increasing physical activity, even an extra ten-minute walk, also helps release tension and clear my mind.

In moments of stress, we often think we need to solve everything at once, but in reality, small steps still move us forward. Easing the moment might look like unclenching the jaw and taking a deep breath, talking with someone we trust, stepping outside for fresh air or improving sleep routines. These small actions create space for the next helpful step.



The path forward may begin with noticing what our body is trying to tell us and responding with one small act of care.

Disclaimer: this information is for educational purposes only and does not constitute psychotherapy or a therapeutic relationship.

Jen Wall is a Registered Psychotherapist with Talk With Jen Counselling and Psychotherapy, a virtual practice based in London, Ontario, supporting caregivers and professionals in high-stress roles experiencing burnout and emotional overload. Learn more at TalkWithJen.ca.

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BACK TO SCHOOL ANXIETY: SUPPORT DON'T MINIMIZE

Ah, August. The weather finally becomes a little more tolerable for sweaty giants like myself. Back-to-school sales become impossible to avoid, kind of like how the Blue Jays have been avoiding putting runs on the scoreboard.

For parents, August often means shopping lists, new shoes and trying to remember what a school bedtime looks like. For kids, though, it often means something else entirely. The fear of returning to school. Transitions are hard.

Think back to graduating, starting a new job or moving to a new city. Even as adults, those changes can bring excitement mixed with uncertainty. Now imagine having only a fraction of the coping skills and life experience you have today. That's where many kids are as September approaches.

They're wondering who their teacher will be, whether they'll have friends in their class, where they'll sit at lunch, if they'll fit in or if they'll be able to keep up. Those worries are real, even if they seem small to us. You may notice more frustration, more tears or shorter tempers. It probably isn't your spaghetti sauce or the vegetables you cleverly hid in dinner. It's more likely all those little worries finding somewhere to escape.

As parents, our job isn't to eliminate every uncomfortable feeling. It's to help our kids move through those feelings. Listen before you solve. Acknowledge their fears instead of dismissing them. Then help them reframe the situation, instead of turning their fear into fuel for your bulldozer of their obstacles.

Didn't get the teacher they hoped for? That's a chance to learn how to adapt. None of their best friends are in their class? It might be an opportunity to make new ones. Life rarely lets us choose every circumstance, but it always gives us opportunities to grow.

Change is uncomfortable, but it also builds confidence. Sometimes the greatest gift we can give our kids isn't removing every worry or concern. It's reminding them that they're capable of handling what's on the other side, with your support and their resilience.

.....
Jeremy McCall is a married father of 3, a social service case manager, and known as "The Dadfather", being the founder and Past President of Dad Club London.





ENHANCING CONFIDENCE, NATURALLY: WELCOME TO YAZDANI AESTHETICS

Life as a parent or caregiver often means putting everyone else's needs before your own. Between busy schedules, endless to-do lists, and caring for loved ones, self-care can easily become an afterthought. At Yazdani Aesthetics, we believe taking time for yourself isn't about vanity—it's about feeling refreshed, confident and like the best version of yourself.

We believe aesthetics should enhance your natural beauty, not change who you are. We don't believe in the same treatment plan for everyone. What works for you may be different from what works for your friend. We listen closely to what you want and make a plan that will help you get there, while preserving the features that make you, you.

Our clinic offers a full range of services from cosmetic plastic surgery for face, body and breast, to non-surgical services

that address common concerns such as fine lines, volume loss, skin quality and facial balance. Our treatments include wrinkle relaxers (otherwise known as Botox), dermal fillers, biostimulators, skin rejuvenation using laser, medical-grade skincare and facials. Whether you're looking to soften signs of aging, improve skin texture, restore youthful volume or simply maintain healthy skin, we're here to help with evidence-based treatments and honest recommendations.

"We spend time walking our patients through their options and being transparent on what works and what doesn't," says Nadine Sabino, nurse and partner in Yazdani Aesthetics. "We believe informed patients make confident decisions, so it's important to discuss realistic expectations, and recommend only what we truly believe will benefit you.

Rather than chasing trends or dramatic transformations, we focus on subtle, balanced results that leave friends and family saying, "You look great!" without quite knowing why."

We're excited to be part of The Mom & Caregiver community. Each month we'll use this space to dive into a treatment or topic in the world of aesthetics, explaining to you how it works and who it's right for.

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WHAT CAREGIVING TOOK FROM ME - AND WHAT IT GAVE ME

When people talk about caregiving, they often focus on the practical things: the appointments, the sleepless nights, the endless responsibilities. What they rarely talk about is what caregiving takes from you emotionally, and what it can unexpectedly give back.

Years ago, when my son's health began to decline and our lives became consumed by complex medical needs, I became someone I barely recognized. I was exhausted. Angry. Bitter. I felt isolated from the world around me.

While other people were making plans, building careers, travelling and living what seemed like normal lives, I was learning how to navigate emergencies and uncertainty. Every day felt heavy. Every setback felt unfair. I carried resentment toward a world that seemed to keep moving while ours stood still.

People often want to help but don't know how. Others quietly disappear because your reality makes them uncomfortable. Over time, I built walls around myself. I hurt others because I was hurting.



Somewhere along the journey, I stopped focusing on what I had lost and started seeing what remained. I began noticing the people who stayed. The friends who showed up without being asked. The family members who stepped in when I was overwhelmed. The healthcare workers who treated my son with dignity and compassion. The strangers who became part of our support system.

Caregiving taught me that nobody is meant to carry life's heaviest burdens alone. It softened parts of me that had become

hardened by grief and disappointment. It gave me a deeper compassion for struggles I cannot see and for battles other people fight behind closed doors.

Today, I am not the broken, angry woman I once was. I am stronger, but also gentler. I have learned strength is allowing others to walk beside you. It is asking for help when you need it and offering it when you can. Caregiving took pieces of me, but in return, it gave me something greater: perspective, empathy, gratitude and a community of people who showed me that even in life's hardest seasons, we were never meant to do it alone.



Meda Riley is a Mother, Palliative Complex Caregiver and Founder of Country Girl Body Products and Country Girl Catering and Preserves.



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HELMET THERAPY FOR BABIES: WHAT TO EXPECT

If you've been following along with this series, you've learned how tummy time, positioning and neck movement all play a role in your baby's development and head shape. For some babies, despite these efforts, head shape differences may persist. When that happens, parents are often introduced to helmet therapy—also known as a cranial remolding orthosis.

Hearing that your baby may need a helmet can feel overwhelming. The good news is that helmet therapy is a safe, well-established and effective way to help guide your baby's head growth into a more symmetrical shape during a period of rapid development.

A baby's skull is still soft and rapidly growing, especially in the first year of life. The helmet does not squeeze or reshape the head but instead provides space in areas where growth is needed,

*The Custom Orthotics team (519) 850-4721 |
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while limiting growth in more prominent areas. Over time, this encourages a more balanced shape.

Helmet therapy may be considered when:

- Head shape asymmetry is moderate to severe
- Flattening is not improving with repositioning and/or physiotherapy
- Your baby is typically between 5–6 months or older, when head growth can still be guided effectively

The process begins with an assessment by a certified orthotist. This typically includes detailed measurements or a 3D scan of your baby's head to evaluate shape and symmetry. If a helmet is recommended, it is custom-made to fit your baby comfortably.

Once fitted, babies usually wear the helmet for about 23 hours per day, with time out for bathing and cleaning. Regular follow-up appointments are scheduled

to adjust the fit as your baby grows and changes.

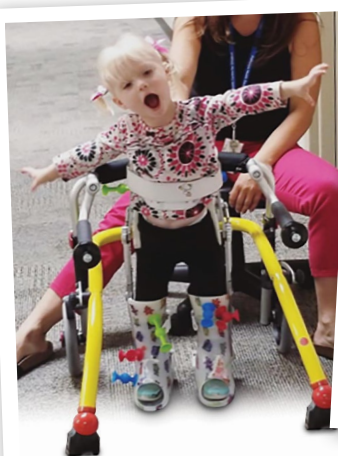
Parents are often surprised by how quickly babies adapt. Helmets are lightweight and most babies adjust within a few days. They can still sleep, play and meet developmental milestones while wearing the helmet. Treatment length varies depending on your baby's age and the severity of asymmetry, but many babies wear a helmet for several months. Starting earlier often means shorter treatment times.

Choosing helmet therapy can feel like a big decision, but it's important to remember that you're not alone in the process. Your care team will guide you every step of the way, ensuring your baby is comfortable and progressing well. With the right timing and support, helmet therapy can be a simple and effective step toward improving head shape and supporting your baby's overall development.



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FINDING YOUR WAY BACK TO YOURSELF



Some people are born knowing exactly what they want to be. I wasn't one of them. My career began in dental hygiene, where I spent over three decades caring for patients' oral health as part of their overall physical wellbeing. But it was my own life experiences that ultimately led me toward a different kind of healing.

Like many, I moved through times of loss, caregiving, health scares and relationships that challenged my sense of self. There were days when just getting through the day was enough. During those years, I turned to therapists, counsellors, mentors and coaches. Each one helped me see the same truth in different ways: change is possible, even when life feels overwhelming.

Today, I work as a Certified Wayfinder Life Coach. My real foundation, however, is lived experience. I understand what it feels like to lose yourself in responsibility, to care for everyone else while your own needs and

dreams fade into the background.

My work now focuses on helping individuals reconnect with who they truly are—not who they think they should be. Together, we rebuild self-worth, strengthen confidence, establish healthy boundaries, and create clarity around what a fulfilling life looks like. My approach is holistic, because real change happens when we support the body, mind, heart and soul together, creating the clarity needed to move forward in a way that feels aligned and sustainable.

There is a difference between surviving and truly living. Surviving is pushing through and meeting expectations that were never truly ours. Truly living is learning to return to ourselves, to listen inwardly and to make choices rooted in authenticity rather than obligation.

No matter where you are today, it is never too late to reconnect with yourself and begin building a life that feels like your own.

Alicia Nolan is the founder of Alicia Nolan Life Coaching, where she helps individuals build confidence, reconnect with themselves and create lives they truly love. A certified life coach, speaker and registered dental hygienist, Alicia believes meaningful change begins with small, intentional steps. Visit her at anolanlifecoaching.ca or on Instagram @an.lifecoaching.

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August
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