



Supporting Young Caregivers: The Hidden Population of Caregivers

Author: Chrissy Sadowski

You are in your 50's. Your parent has been diagnosed with cancer. You are trying to support them – cook meals, go to appointments with them, listen to them as they worry.

Now imagine you were in this exact same situation but you are 16. Your girlfriend just broke up with you, you won't be able to try out for the football team because you have to help at home. You are trying to get your driver's license, write exams and are going through puberty. How heavy is that?

A young caregiver is a child, teen or young adult who supports a family member for a variety of reasons. It could be a parent, sibling or grandparent. They may have a chronic illness like cancer, diabetes, dementia or Multiple Sclerosis. They may have an intellectual disability like Autism or Down Syndrome. They may have a physical disability from a brain injury or workplace accident. They may have mental health challenges like depression, anxiety or PTSD. They may have addictions to drugs or alcohol. Or they may have a variety of socio-economic factors like being a new family to the country and only the child speaks English or having a single parent at home

Responsibilities are different from their peers. Young Caregivers have extra chores. They help more around the house. They support their families with mobility, grooming and even administering medication. They worry. They listen. They give advice.

Young Caregivers are resilient and mature. They have bonded with their family members and are great communicators. They are independent and have a full book of life skills but with these upsides come some challenges as well.

“

I wish medical professionals would listen to me and know that when I talk about my father, I know what I am talking about. I see it every day. I'm the one caring for him every day.

- Young Caregiver,
Age 14

Supporting Young Caregivers

Young Caregivers often feel isolated and lonely. They worry about their family members. Their friends don't understand. They can suffer from depression and even suicidal ideation.

Did you know?

- 14 – 27 hours of care are provided by a young caregiver to their family member per week. That is equivalent to a part time job.
- 25% of young caregivers provide 3 – 6 hours of care per day
- The cost savings to the healthcare system per young caregiver is \$25,000 to \$50,000 dollars. (Chalmers, H. (2008, 2017)

Barriers include:

- We don't consider children/youth in the home helping with care.
- We don't know the questions to ask to identify young caregivers.
- Cultural considerations.
- Children/teens/young adults who don't identify as a young caregiver.
- Some families are afraid of unwanted interventions.



How can we help? What can we do?

This is where Young Caregivers Association comes in!

Established in 2003, Young Caregivers Association has transformed the lives of young caregivers, the unseen population of family caregivers. We are the first organization in Canada dedicated to supporting young caregivers and their families who live in rural and urban communities, while building awareness across Canada. We collaborate with community partners to bring specialized programs and expertise to professionals and organizations across Canada, giving them the tools they need to positively impact children, youth and young adults.

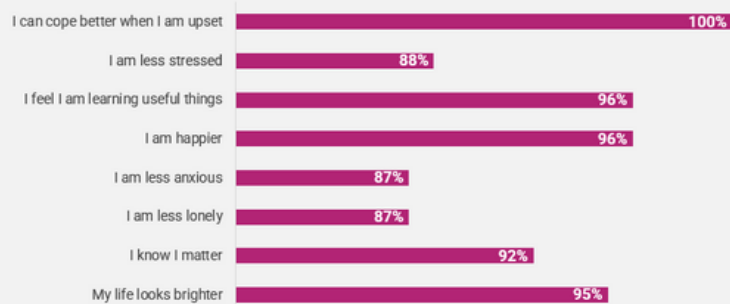
Supporting Young Caregivers

Our Powerhouse® programs are evidence informed programs developed to teach young caregivers life and personal development skills, provide opportunities to connect with other caregiving kids, bring caregiving families together and reinforce self care. These programs include: summer camp, weekly respite, group and individual counselling, 1:1 social recreation programs, life skills, programs in partnership, Powerhouse® In School programs and virtual programs. YCA is also expanding across Canada to work with Caregiving organizations in other provinces to further our reach and supports. All of our programs, both clinical and social recreation programs are free. We also support with transportation for those families who have barriers attending programs.

Our Knowledge Centre:

We have recently launched our Knowledge Centre with includes supports and resources for Young Caregivers, Parents, Educators, Health Professionals and Social Workers. These resources include signs to look for, questions you can ask, where to refer, toolkits for professionals and how to advocate.

Because of Powerhouse®



Testimonials:

“When I’m at Powerhouse, and I hate to say this, but I feel like I’ve escaped my responsibilities. Like I don’t have to worry about other things. I know it sounds bad but sometimes I feel trapped when I’m at home because there is so much expected of me but here I don’t have that.”

“Being able to share my story with others is really hard sometimes. I like having a space where people understand what I am going through.”

What we can do:

Unsure how to support a young caregiver?

Check out our website at www.youngcaregivers.ca. Have a question or need help identifying a young caregiver? Fill out an information request. Interested in a presentation for your organization or a program in partnership? Email Chrissy Sadowski at chrissys@youngcaregivers.ca

“Our vision is to see a Canada where young caregivers and their families are recognized, supported, and empowered to achieve their full potential.”

***Building
community
health together.***



greaterhamiltonhealthnetwork.ca



info@ghhn.ca



[@greaterhamiltonhealthnetwork](https://www.instagram.com/greaterhamiltonhealthnetwork)



[@greaterhamiltonhealthnetwork](https://www.facebook.com/greaterhamiltonhealthnetwork)



[@GHHN_TheNetwork](https://twitter.com/GHHN_TheNetwork)



<https://www.linkedin.com/company/greater-hamilton-healthnetwork>

