

Caregiver finds support despite limited social network

John Campbell tries to be understanding of family and friends when it comes to his wife's Alzheimer's disease, but sometimes he can't quite manage it.

"Everybody seems to be sympathetic, everybody asks, 'How is Nora?' But this is the typical superficial question," says John. "What's the point of asking? Why don't you go and see her if you're interested?"

But the Toronto couple has little family living nearby. John is originally from Greece while Nora hails from Denmark. They have no children, and their circle of friends is small.



Getting things off his chest

John, 82, is determined to do as much as he can for Nora on his own. Twice a day, he drives to see her at her long-term care home, to sit with her and feed her lunch and dinner.

Recently, he joined a support group at the [Alzheimer Society Toronto](#) and he took staff up on an offer of one-on-one sessions with a social worker.

"It helps you get things off your chest," he says. "You unload and maybe ask a question. It could be something you already know, but somebody else's viewpoint from a different angle could give you something you didn't think of."

Good days, bad days

John reaches out to the community in other ways. He takes part in events sponsored by a local seniors' group and attends educational workshops on Alzheimer's disease. And once a week, he and one of his close friends have dinner together.

John understands how easy it is for other caregivers in his situation to fall into a "monotonous groove," but he urges them to find out what community supports are available and take advantage of them.

"I do believe it helps," he says. "I'm lonely of course, especially in the morning hours and the night hours. But I have my good days and bad days."

The Alzheimer Society's [Early Detection Checklist](#) is a good way to keep track of early warning signs.

Photo: John Rennison, Hamilton, ON.