

LOOKING AFTER YOU



Most carers, once they adopt their caring role, fail to address their own needs. This may be by giving up paid work, stopping socialising with friends, neglecting their own health, and even simple things like not allowing themselves time to read a book or go for a walk. Carers sometimes persist with their caring role to the point of exhaustion, frustration and breakdown. Sometimes, they unconsciously start doing too much for their relative, to the point where he/she fails to take on board their own responsibilities.

Along with the caring role, often there are issues of guilt and blame. Sometimes carers feel directly responsible for their loved one's mental illness and ill health, or they feel that their relative is suffering because of shortcomings in their caring. They may think that taking 'more' or 'better' care of their loved one will help them recover from their mental illness.

As can be imagined, some carers take on a huge responsibility. This often leads to their own mental and physical ill health. Neglecting one's own needs and health can lead to a tired, exhausted, frustrated and emotionally drained carer. Being in such a position can adversely affect the decision making process of a carer and, in turn, their caring capacity. It may even adversely affect the relationship between the carer and their relative.

A carer who cares for him/herself is able to better care for their loved one.

How to care for you

- Ⓢ Devote at least 15 minutes a day to yourself, and do what you enjoy doing eg. Going for walks, talking to a friend, reading a book, sitting down with a cup of tea, watching your favourite TV show etc.
- Ⓢ Plan for longer breaks. Use respite services if available.
- Ⓢ Attend support groups for carers/relatives.
- Ⓢ Avoid extra pressures or unnecessary tasks – some tasks can be done at another time.
- Ⓢ Try to get out of the house at least once a day.
- Ⓢ Eat regular health meals.
- Ⓢ Exercise regularly.
- Ⓢ Keep up your own interests and friendships.



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