

The Seven Habits of Highly Effective Carers

1. Learn as much as possible about your relative or friend's illness/disability

Understanding the needs and behaviours of the person you are supporting is important. Knowing which behaviours are symptoms of the illness or condition will help you not take things personally. It will also help with understanding medication use and what to do in an emergency.

2. Share the care with family, friends and community services

Caring is often more than a one person job. Don't wear yourself into the ground by expecting that you have to do everything on your own. Research has shown that the carers who feel most in control of their caring situation are those who have the most assistance. Community services are there to help so think of yourself as a care coordinator.

3. Look after your own physical and mental health

You cannot care for someone else if you do not look after your own health. Remember, you are only human. Try to get regular rest, exercise and eat healthy meals. Take time out to relax if necessary. Use respite for regular breaks.

4. Get as much information as you can on all the types of assistance available and Use them.

Apart from community services, there may be financial help which you are entitled to, or schemes which provide equipment etc. Ring the Commonwealth Carer Resource Centre to find out what you can get.

5. Attend to your emotions and talk to professionals if necessary

It is normal for carers to feel any or all of, anger, guilt, frustration, sadness, grief, fear, worry and hurt. You are not alone in these feelings. Connecting with other carers through support groups is one way to overcome isolation. If you want to change something about your caring situation, talking to a counsellor may help you sort out your options.

6. Be assertive

If you need help, don't be afraid to ask. If you have trouble getting the help you need, staff at the Commonwealth Carer Resource Centre may be able to advocate on your behalf. Also, make sure the doctor/s involved know how caring is impacting upon you. You also have the right to complain if services do not provide assistance of high quality.

7. Plan for the future

Commonwealth Carer
Resource Centre
Free call: 1800 242 636