

Tips for Carers

Emotional Wellbeing



Caring can be very rewarding, but it can also be physically and emotionally exhausting. You are doing something amazing, but you do need to take care of yourself as well as the people you care for.

We have put together some ideas that can make all the difference if your caring responsibilities are leaving you emotionally fraught or physically wiped out.

Ask for help & accept the help you're offered

There is no shame in asking for help when you need it and, just as important, to accept help you're offered. Be realistic and don't try to manage everything on your own, have a list of family, friends or support services that are there to help, even if occasionally and don't be afraid to call on them. Consider noting down everything you have to do and delegate any tasks you can. Don't feel you are alone with your caring responsibilities.

Dealing with guilt

A lot of people feel guilty that they are not the perfect carer. They may feel guilty if they start to get frustrated or get feelings of dislike or detachment towards the person they are caring for. Relationships can be difficult when things change and someone becomes dependent on someone else. Remember that you are coping as well as you can and look at sharing responsibilities if you start to feel overwhelmed with sensations of guilt. Ask for professional help when you feel you need it.

Respite Care

This means that someone else provides care for the person you care for to give you some time out. This can be for a few hours or for longer periods of time perhaps involving the person you care for going into residential care temporarily. Ask whether respite care is available for the person you support, usually via an NYCC Carers Assessment. More information is available here [Carers' breaks and respite care - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk)

Stay Active

You might feel worn out from your caring responsibilities but try to do some physical exercise as often as you can. You'll be surprised how energised you feel afterwards. Choose something you enjoy, walking, swimming, an on-line exercise session or just some simple stretches. It will help keep you healthy and make things feel a bit more manageable.

Eat Well

It's impossible to function well if you do not have the right nutrition in your system. Try to eat a varied diet, include as many fruits and vegetables, as well as healthy protein as you can.

Eat a healthy breakfast, it can help you to avoid unhealthy snacks midway through the morning. Cut down on saturated fats and salt – unsaturated fats from plants are far healthier, but even these should be eaten in moderation. Don't add salt when you're cooking and don't add any to your meal before you even taste it!

Drink plenty of water. Sometimes, when we think we're hungry, we are actually just thirsty but don't recognise it. Try adding good things to your diet rather than taking bad things away. The

more good things you eat, the less appetite you will have for the bad things you might normally crave.

Sleep Well

It's sometimes easier said than done but getting enough sleep can make a real difference to how you feel. So if you're having trouble sleeping, try the following strategies:

Create rituals such as having a hot bath or a milky drink just before heading to bed. Getting up and going to bed at the same times every day.

Make your bedroom a screen free zone, don't use your computer or phone late at night.

Avoid caffeine and alcohol in the evenings, both of which can keep you awake.

Some people find herbal scents or supplements relaxing, try lavender or camomile.

Make your bedroom dark enough.

Keep in touch with friends

When you're a carer, you're always busy and have little time to spare. However whenever you can, do your best to get some social time with friends or family. It doesn't have to be a face to face visit, phone calls or screen chats via social media will keep that contact.

Take time for yourself

Don't lose track of the things you love doing. Whether it's reading a good book or playing the guitar, use any time you can find to reconnect with your hobbies. Or try something new! If these overlap with other self-care tips, like cooking healthy food or going for a hike in the countryside, all the better.

Consider Your Emotional Wellbeing

Your emotional health can be especially impacted by the wellbeing of the person you are caring for. If they have a life-limiting condition or if they are distressed, you may struggle to cope.

Some signs that you are struggling with your own mental health include:

- Extreme tiredness, often combined with not being able to sleep, or sleeping too much
- Not being able to concentrate, lack of motivation or low mood
- Feeling extremely energetic and not being able to wind down
- Avoiding going out or seeing people
- Changes in your eating habits or appetite

It is important to realise when you need help, without being afraid of asking for support. It's worth a good chat to the doctor about you and not this time for the person you care for.

Talk to Others In Your Position

As an unpaid family carer, there are many different ways of linking to others in similar positions to you. At Carers Plus Yorkshire we have carer pen pal schemes and fortnightly carer activities which can provide peer support. Knowing you're not alone can help you practically as well as emotionally.

Carers Plus Yorkshire can also signpost you to a wealth of specialist organisations who have specific groups or activities.

There is also a great range of online support out there, which can be more flexible than face to face support. Look for discussion forums or Facebook groups for carers and consider testing the waters with a post when you feel ready.

And remember no matter how difficult some days are, you are not alone!

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