

## MAINTAINING HEALTH & WELLBEING

As a carer you need time and space to tend to your health and wellbeing. Better health and wellbeing enables you to enjoy life and cope with any challenges that come your way. It also means you have more energy and capacity to provide effective care to the person you are supporting.

Research shows that many carers suffer depression and anxiety. Carers also often suffer medical and psychological conditions, including chronic pain and injuries.

Carers can neglect their own health issues due to lack of time and the inability to afford treatment. Many also have financial concerns. Many carers do not work or work fewer hours than they would like due to their caring responsibilities.

Consequently, it is important that you, as a carer, find out what you can do to care for yourself and receive support when you need it.

### WHAT CAN YOU DO TO MAINTAIN HEALTH AND WELLBEING?

#### Understand & Accept Your Feelings

There are no right or wrong feelings. Each carer responds to caring in his or her own way. Common feelings for carers include:

- Guilt • Frustration and anger • Love
- Commitment • Fear • Grief and loss.

Accepting your feelings and taking time to understand them can reduce stress for you. If they are overwhelming, find ways to manage them that are suitable for you.

#### Take Time For Regular Relaxation and Stress-Breaking Techniques

Find ways to deal with stress that suit you. Some techniques used by carers include:

- relaxation and meditation techniques
- learning to manage positive and negative thoughts
- exercise such as walking
- talking to a non-judgemental person
- spending time on an interest.

Include your relaxation and stress techniques in your daily routine. Even relaxing or walking for ten minutes a day can be beneficial.

#### Be Assertive

Assertiveness techniques help you communicate your needs in a way that is respectful of your needs and of the person you are talking to. Assertiveness can help you say no or negotiate solutions to problems that are satisfying for everyone. Doing this can also enhance your relationships with the people around you.

#### Accept What You Can and Cannot Control

Stress can increase when you feel you are not in control of what is happening around you. You cannot change other people and you may not be able to change your situation but you can control how you feel and respond.

Focusing on you and what you can change or manage within yourself helps you to feel more in control. In turn, when you let go of trying to change others or controlling what you cannot, you leave more energy for yourself and for caring. This can also strengthen your relationships with the person you are supporting and with others around you.

#### Have Regular Respite

Regular respite helps you to relax and recharge your batteries as well as to make time for other interests or people in your life. There is a range of respite available from two hours a week in-home to holidays or residential accommodation for two or more weeks for the person you support. Respite gives the person you support a break too and time to spend with other people.

#### Share The Care With Family and Friends

Sharing the care with family and friends reduces the stress on you. It can also provide a change of companionship and further support for the person you care for.

Asking for help is not always easy. However, family and friends are often willing to help when they know the impact on you. Be open to different ways of sharing the care. If your family or friends seem reluctant to help, find out why. When you know why, you can find ways to resolve or work around these issues.

*Source: Carers Australia*