



Caregiving

Welcome to this week's discussion.

The focus this week relates to the stress and fatigue that carers can often experience.

The demands of caregiving can be overwhelming, especially if you feel that you're in over your head or have little control over the situation. If the stress of caregiving is left unchecked, it can take a toll on your health, relationships, and state of mind eventually leading to caregiver burnout. And when you get to that point, both you and the person you're caring for suffer.

Taking care of yourself isn't a luxury, it's a necessity.

That's why managing the stress levels in your life is just as important as making sure the person you care for gets to their doctor's appointment or takes their medication on time. No matter how stressful your caregiving responsibilities, or how bleak your situation seems, there are things you can do to ease your stress levels, to help you start to feel positive again.

Problem signs and symptoms

By learning to recognise the signs of caregiver stress, you can take steps to deal with the problem and prevent burnout. Signs and symptoms can be:

- Anxiety, depression, irritability
- Feeling tired and run down
- Difficulty sleeping
- Overreacting to minor nuisances
- New or worsening health problems
- Trouble concentrating
- Feeling increasingly resentful
- Drinking, smoking, or eating more
- Neglecting responsibilities
- Cutting back on leisure activities
- You have much less energy than you once had
- It seems like you catch every cold or bout of flu that's going around
- You're constantly exhausted, even after sleeping or taking a break
- You neglect your own needs, either because you're too busy or you don't care anymore
- Your life revolves around caregiving, but it gives you little satisfaction
- You have trouble relaxing, even when help is available
- You're increasingly impatient and irritable with the person you're caring for
- You feel helpless and hopeless

Do you know someone who is a carer and is demonstrating the signs above?

Are you a carer who recognise some of the above in yourself



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Tips to lighten the load.

- Practice acceptance and reduce the feelings of blame
- Think about ways that caring makes YOU stronger
- Don't let caregiving take over your life
- Focus on the things that you can control
- Celebrate small victories, all your efforts count
- Applaud your own efforts and reward yourself
- Talk to a supportive family member, friend or colleague
- Ask for help, look into respite care (if relevant) and accept help if it is offered
- Be up front and speak up if you are struggling
- Try to spread the responsibility if possible
- Ask someone to regularly check in with you for a chat or coffee
- Be willing to relinquish control and give yourself a break
- Maintain your personal relationships outside of your carer network
- Share your feelings
- Prioritise activities that bring you enjoyment
- Find ways to pamper yourself and make time for them
- Get time out of the house
- Take care of your own health and practice relaxation techniques
- Eat well and exercise regularly
- Don't skimp on your sleep, its an important stress reliever
- Join a caregiver support group

Discuss in your teams:

- Do you know someone who has carer duties? What action could you take to help them?
- Are you a carer who sometimes feels it is all too much? Could you benefit from some of the tips above?
- How can your team support someone in your team who has carer duties? Could you set up an internal team support group?
- Do you talk about outside influences in your one to ones? Could you make this a regular topic of conversation?
- Think about and discuss all of the things that constitute carer activities (a sick family member, young children, people with specific needs)