

Caring for the Carer

Carer's Emotional Health

During this challenging time of increased responsibility, decreased time available and competing demands, emotional health and wellbeing is what allows you to cope and deal with life's situations. Most of us take emotional and mental health for granted and only focus on it when problems occur. But like physical health, it requires attention to build and maintain.

A carer's emotional health is very important. Chronic stress that doesn't go away can lead to health problems. There are many different tools that can help you achieve balance in your life, with time to relax, enjoy relationships, work and have fun.

First, ask yourself, 'Am I stressed?' Learn to recognise signs of stress:

- Tiredness
- Irritability
- Sadness
- Avoidance
- Over eating

Most of us have particular telltale signs that we are feeling under pressure or we are beginning to get stressed. Make sure you:

- Check in with yourself
- Learn your personal tell tale signs

Secondly, ask yourself, 'Why Am I Stressed?' Try to identify what in particular is causing your current stress levels, for example:

- You have too much to do
- Family disagreements
- Feelings of inadequacy
- Feeling unsupported

Be honest with yourself. Then identify what you can and cannot change.

Remember, we can only change ourselves; we cannot change another person.



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Tips for Caring for Yourself

Problem Solving

Ask yourself:

- "What can I do about it?"
- Make a list of possible solutions
 - Choose one option
- Set a goal:
 - Small and manageable
 - Give yourself a timeframe
 - Break down bigger goals into smaller more attainable pieces
- Try it Out
- Ask yourself, 'Did it Work?'
- If necessary try something else

Requesting and Accepting Help

Sometimes we need help in certain situations, but we set up barriers that stop us from asking:

- Pride
- Avoiding burdening others
- Protecting the person with an ABI
- I will do it the best
- Sense of duty and responsibility
- Embarrassed or ashamed about not coping



What we need to do:

- Asking for help is natural. It is a sign of maturity and reflects personal strength
- Ask for exactly what you need
- Divide tasks down – lighten the load
- Consider who is ideal to help – fit the task with the person
- Build and widen your circles of support
- The answer 'no' may only mean – not now.
- Be clear and specific. Don't hint or hope the person will guess what you need, They can not read your mind!
- Return the favour when you can

Share

It's ok, to talk about your situation with someone.

- Choose someone you trust
- Be honest
- Talk to a professional
- Talk about other things with others. It's also ok to talk about something other than brain injury or your loved one
- See friends and extended family members as often as possible
- keep up the pattern of social interaction
- **DON'T FORGET TO LAUGH**

Remember Yourself

Always remember that you have needs as well. Don't forget that you are an important person; you are every little bit as important as the person with the brain injury.

Remember:

- You are human
 - You are not perfect
 - You have limitations
- Do something for yourself everyday
- Treat yourself every now and again

Most Importantly:

There is no perfect way to deal with any situation
Be forgiving of yourself
Above all be gentle to yourself

