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## Pouring from an Empty Cup:

A guide to Carer Wellbeing

## ABOUT CARERS NSW

Carers NSW is the peak non-government organisation for carers in New South Wales (NSW). Carers NSW is part of the National Carer Network and a member of Carers Australia. Our vision is an Australia that values and supports all carers, and our goals are to:

- Be a leading carer organisation in which carers have confidence
- Actively promote carer recognition and support
- Actively support carers to navigate a changing service landscape that will be characterised by ongoing policy reform
- Promote connected community experiences and opportunities for carers that are inclusive of diverse carer groups
- Lead and advocate for carer-specific and carer-inclusive policy making, research and service delivery
- Continue to be a quality-driven, responsive and carer-focused organisation.

## ABOUT CARERS

A carer is any individual who provides unpaid care and support to a family member or friend who has a disability, mental illness, drug and/or alcohol dependency, chronic condition, terminal illness or who is frail. Across NSW, there are approximately 854,300 carers,<sup>1</sup> and to replace the care they provide the NSW Government would have to spend more than \$25 billion each year.<sup>2</sup> Carers come from all walks of life, cultural backgrounds and age groups. For many, caring is a 24 hour-a-day job with emotional, physical and financial impacts that can also affect their participation in employment, education and community activities.

## ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

This resource has been developed for carers by Carers NSW following extensive consultations with Policy and Research, Education and Training, and Carer Gateway teams within Carers NSW along with carer representatives in Carers NSW Carer Gateway NSW 4 service region. It has been developed in response to the analysis of 2020 National Carer Survey report where carers indicated their experience with high psychological distress and social isolation, deteriorating their mental health and wellbeing. This resource seeks to create awareness among carers to look out for their own wellbeing and provides them with simple tangible self-led strategies that they can undertake to improve and maintain their mental health as well as key information about accessing mental health services and resources as needed.

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (2019) *Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of findings, 2018*, New South Wales Tables, Canberra.

<sup>2</sup> Carers NSW estimate based on Deloitte Access Economics (2020) *The economic value of informal care in Australia in 2020*, Carers Australia.

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## Overview

Carers NSW has developed this *Pouring from an Empty Cup: A Guide to Carer Wellbeing*, a mental health resource for carers. As a carer, you may often put the needs of the person you care for before your own needs. However, it is equally important to look after yourself too, including your own physical and mental wellbeing.

The quality of care you provide is dependent on your own overall health. Sometimes your caring responsibilities can be so overwhelming that you barely have any time for yourself or things that you like to do. This can lead you to push yourself beyond your limits, eventually leading to burn-out. You may become stressed, mentally drained or ill. To stop this from happening, you must fill your own cup first since you cannot pour from an empty cup. It is always good to take some time out for yourself every now and then to relax and reset in order for you to keep performing your caring role.

This resource outlines some easy-to-use practical strategies that can be adopted in everyday life for you to look after yourself and your own mental wellbeing.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a huge impact on our lives leaving most of us feeling overwhelmed, stressed and anxious. The pandemic with lockdowns and fear of uncertainty, alongside caring has especially been challenging. Many regions in NSW have also been impacted by the widespread floods, causing additional distress. This toolkit looks at small, practical things that you can do to maintain your own health and wellbeing. If you require further information on managing COVID-19 or natural disasters, you can find our resources here.

For COVID-19 information: <https://www.carersnsw.org.au/resources/carer-resources?keywords=covid&showing=18>









For emergency and disaster planning: <https://www.carersnsw.org.au/services-and-support/advice-for-carers/planning-ahead/emergency-planning>

For latest COVID-19 news: <https://www.carersnsw.org.au/about-us/news>

## What to look out for?

As a carer, you may often experience feelings of fulfillment, companionship and satisfaction. Yet, caring responsibilities may affect your wellbeing. The physical impact may include fatigue, weight loss, weight gain, muscle strain, injuries and chronic health problems. The psychological impact may include distress, depression, anxiety, grief, loss and guilt. It is also common to experience feelings of anger and resentment.

## WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR

 <p>Feeling unhappy or depressed</p>	 <p>Feeling anxious or worried</p>	 <p>Angry or emotional outbursts</p>
 <p>Alcohol or substance abuse</p>	 <p>Changes in appetite or weight</p>	 <p>Withdrawing from friends and/or family</p>
 <p>Feeling worthless or guilty</p>	 <p>Increased tiredness or sleep problems</p>	 <p>Changes in behavior</p>

### Wellbeing Check

According to the SPIRE model of wellbeing, the overall wellbeing of an individual is a product of five main elements. These are Spiritual, Physical, Intellectual, Relational and Emotional (SPIRE) wellbeing. So, when you face a challenge, it may impact you in different ways. Click on the link below to complete a short quiz to learn more about your overall health and some tips to improve your wellbeing. Please note that there are no right or wrong answers.

<https://carersnsw.typeform.com/to/iikmRasz>

### What happens if you do not look out for the signs?

Did you know that sometimes caring responsibilities can adversely affect your mental health and wellbeing? This can also impact your relationship with the person you provide care for, your personal relationships, and cause exhaustion.

This state of total mental, physical and emotional exhaustion is called carer burnout. Carer burnout is a huge risk to your own wellbeing. It also reduces your capacity to care for your family member or friend and may result in feelings of anger, frustration, and resentment towards them.

### What causes carer burnout?

1. **Unpreparedness towards caring responsibilities:** It can be stressful if you have to take on caring responsibilities without warning, for instance, an unforeseen diagnosis of a friend or family member that will require care. Or you may be taking on more and more responsibilities over time. Whether it is sudden or gradual, this can cause stress and anxiety, leading to carer burnout over time.
2. **Lack of resources:** You may experience a shortage of time trying to juggle multiple responsibilities. For working carers, it may mean a reduction in working hours or quitting your job, which can lead to a reduction in income causing financial strain. You may even feel that you do not have the skills to fulfil your caring responsibilities. This can cause a lot of stress and eventual burn out.
3. **Feelings of hopelessness or helplessness:** You may, at times feel powerless or stuck in an endless routine. For some carers, it can be hard to believe that you will feel better in the future, especially if you are caring for someone with a life limiting condition or degenerative disease like Alzheimer's or Parkinson's disease, whose health does not improve over time.
4. **Previous history of stress, trauma or health related issues:** Burnout can also occur as a result of your own history of stress and/ or trauma in your personal life. If you have health related issues of your own, caring for someone can trigger stress and anxiety, often associated with burnout.

### How do you know if you have carer burnout?

You may experience a number of physical, behavioural and emotional symptoms. Watch out for the symptoms listed below and seek help if required.

PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS	BEHAVIOURAL SYMPTOMS	EMOTIONAL SYMPTOMS
Body aches and pains	Irritability	Anxiety
Fatigue	Lack of motivation	Depression
Frequent headaches	Lack of interest in activities you enjoyed	Feeling hopeless
Weakened immune system	Isolation from friends and family	Feeling overwhelmed
Feeling tired and run down	Change in sleeping patterns	Denial about loved one's condition
Changes in appetite or weight	Neglecting responsibilities	Becoming oversensitive, angry or argumentative

### How to avoid carer burnout?

[Click here to download infographic: Tips to handle Carer Burnout](#)

**Practice acceptance.** It must be very difficult when providing practical and emotional support to the person you are caring for, especially when you didn't see it coming. In such situations, it can be helpful

to simply accept rather than fight the harsh realities. Practising acceptance will give you peace of mind and the ability to think rationally.

**Embrace your caring role.** Focus on the positive, deeper and meaningful relationship that you have developed with the person you are caring for. You may feel burdened and resentful due to your caring responsibilities but try to focus on the bigger picture. Perhaps you provide care to repay your parents for the care they gave you growing up. Or maybe it's because of your values or the example you want to set for your children. These deep, meaningful motivations can help sustain you through difficult times.

**Look for the silver lining.** As hard as your caring role is, think about how it has made you stronger and more adaptive or how it has brought you closer to the person you're caring for or other family members. Acknowledge that your caring role has also helped you develop new skills and attributes that can drive you through life challenges in the future.

**Take time for yourself.** Is your caring role demanding and time-consuming? It is important to not let your caring responsibilities take over your whole existence. Invest in things that give you meaning and purpose whether it's your family, catching up with friends, a favourite hobby, or your career.

**Focus on the things you can control.** Your caring role may cause you to feel anxious in circumstances that are out of your control. It is quite common to easily become overwhelmed by fear and negative emotions while dealing with uncertainty. So rather than stressing over things you can't control, focus on the things you can control and do not be afraid to ask for help.

**Celebrate the small victories.** Remind yourself every day that all your efforts matter. As a carer, you cannot cure the condition of the person you are caring for. But do not underestimate the positive contribution that you are making to their life by providing a safe and comfortable environment.

If you are experiencing carer burnout due to the COVID-19 pandemic- you can access our helpful resources here <https://www.carersnsw.org.au/resources/carer-resources?keywords=covid&showing=18>

Support, such as **RESPIRE**, is available if you are experiencing carer burnout. 'Respite' means taking a break. This break can be planned or unplanned if due to an emergency. If you get sick or hurt and you cannot look after someone, then emergency respite services can help you find ways to look after the person you care for while you get better. Planned respite care can help you plan for regular breaks to rest and recharge. Carer Gateway offers tailored support packages for planned respite that are specifically designed according to your needs. Since all caring situations are different, there is no one size fits all and hence, tailored support packages can be used for a wide variety of reasons, for example, cooking and cleaning services, assistance with shopping, buying a new equipment to study etc. Find more information on <https://www.carergateway.gov.au/respite>. Another form of respite is to take a break to look after yourself. The sections below will give you diverse ideas on how to look after yourself.

## Adapting to adversity

Click on <https://lms.carersnsw.org.au/> to complete online training on **Building Resilient Brains**.

Have you ever wondered how our brain works and responds to stress along with the long-term impacts of stress on our wellbeing? Stress can be controlled by understanding the difference between situations that are within and outside of our control. Once you understand this difference, you will be able to better strategise solutions.

Our brain is designed to protect us by responding to threatening situations that are harmful to us. Our brain increases our ability to sense and remember negative events to improve our ability to respond. Emotions like fear, anxiety, isolation, loss, grief and anger cause stress. The brain perceives stress as

a threat. This results in a fight-or-flight response where our body prepares to either fight or run away. As a carer, you may feel more stressed due to increased demand from your caring responsibilities. This creates an imbalance that may make you feel less able to cope with any extra stress, even minor issues.

### Differentiating between things within and outside of control (Circles of Control and Concern)

The circle of control is about the circumstances, issues or things you can control while the circle of concern is about the situations you cannot control.

Sometimes the caring role can become too overwhelming. This can cause you to become frustrated or overly focussed on the areas you can't control, making you reactive. But if you stop thinking about the things you can't control and start focussing on the actions you can take that make you feel better and help get you through the day, you will be practising a more proactive approach that will ultimately reduce stress levels.

### What to do when (The Recognise, Respond and Refer framework)

Although self-care is a simple concept in theory, life as a carer can be overwhelming, especially when you are feeling stressed.

It can help to use the Recognise, Respond and Refer framework to reflect on your own wellbeing and identify issues and organise thoughts and actions.

Recognise	Respond	Refer
<p>This is to identify signs of distress and self-awareness, acceptance, listening to yourself. You can ask yourself questions like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is working, what isn't?</li> <li>• What am I happy about right now, and not so happy about?</li> <li>• What is causing me stress?</li> </ul>	<p>Deliberately practising self-care and maintaining small daily habits. Prompting yourself with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What can I do and what should I not do?</li> <li>• Can I take some time every day for me (even if it's 5 minutes)?</li> <li>• Am I prioritising my most important daily tasks?</li> </ul>	<p>This is to find the best resource that caters to your needs, provides you support and increases your knowledge. This could be catching up with family/friends, doing some internet research or reaching out to a professional for support or advice.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is what I am doing or thinking about helping or harming me, do I need something more?</li> <li>• Do I need informal/formal support?</li> <li>• Have I reached out and accessed carer support services?</li> </ul>

Learn new ways to manage stress and improve your wellbeing through self-guided coaching online or *In-person Carer Coaching* on <https://coaching.carergateway.gov.au/>.

Learn new skills to look after someone and yourself. Learn new ways to deal with stress, legal issues, and your happiness, health and safety. <https://skills.carergateway.gov.au/>

### Strategies for Self-care

In this section, you will see a few strategies that can help you look after yourself based on your caring roles and responsibilities on a daily basis without you having to make any major changes to your schedule. Your needs may be very different to other carers due to complex situations and diverse caring



dynamics. You may resonate with one strategy more than others. So, you can have little takeaways from each section to create a wellbeing plan for yourself that is tailor-made according to your needs.

## EXAMPLES OF SELF CARE ACTIVITIES



1. Take time out to stretch, go for a walk, do some moderate exercises each day.



2. Play music to lift your mood. Find time to express yourself through music or dance.



3. Use technology to help with shopping, staying in touch with family and friends.



4. Book in an activity you enjoy such as coffee with a friend, or getting your hair and nails done.



5. Set a time to enjoy arts, crafts or a calming activity like knitting, jigsaw puzzles or Sudoku.

## STRATEGIES FOR ACHIEVING BETTER MENTAL HEALTH

Where possible, try to implement these strategies:



### The SSUPR Model

Watch this video: [https://www.ted.com/talks/linda\\_ercoli\\_self\\_care\\_for\\_caregivers](https://www.ted.com/talks/linda_ercoli_self_care_for_caregivers) where Linda Ercoli discusses carer stress and introduces SSUPR model to deal with it. Carer Gateway services can assist you with their services and support options. Visit <https://www.carergateway.gov.au/>.

**S:** Sand (don't stick your head in it): notice symptoms, talk to the doctor, discuss the situation with the person you care for. For more information click <https://www.carersnsw.org.au/services-and-support/advice-for-carers>

**S:** Support: join a carer support group to learn more and feel supported that you're not alone. Meet with people like you who care for someone either in-person within a safe space or online where you can

participate in online group chats. Share stories, knowledge and experience. *For more information click <https://www.carergateway.gov.au/about/peer-support-groups>*

**U:** Uplift: uplift yourself by creating good thoughts and positive way of life.

**P:** Personal: try not to take things personally when they come from the person you care for who may be unwell, frustrated or in pain.

**R:** Respite: seek respite care as and when needed. ‘Respite’ means taking a break. If you get sick or hurt and you cannot look after someone, then emergency respite services can help you. Carer Gateway can help you organise care services while you have a break. Planned respite care can help you plan for regular breaks to rest and recharge. Visit Carer Gateway <https://www.carergateway.gov.au/respite> for more information. Respite can also be in the form of taking short regular breaks that suit you and doing things that you like.

### 5 Ways to Wellbeing

Research from around the world shows that you can improve your wellbeing and happiness by doing five simple things as part of your day: connecting with others, being active, continuing to learn, being aware and helping others.

Doing these five actions can help you cope better with stress and to live longer, happier and healthier, in ways that are good for yourself and others. A healthy mind is just as important as a healthy body for overall wellbeing. So regardless of how well, young or old you are, or who you care for, everyone can benefit from giving the 5 Ways to Wellbeing a try.

[Click here to download infographic: 5 ways to wellbeing](#)

**Connect:** developing and maintaining close relationships with family, friends, neighbours or people you meet, at work, school or at the shops is very important for good health and wellbeing. Spending time to connect with closed ones or carers with similar experiences through [peer support groups](#) increases social participation and positive experiences.

**Be Active:** Keep your mind and body active. Step outside your house and go for a walk or run. Play a sport, dance, ride a bike or do some gardening. Find something you enjoy and do it regularly. Exercising makes you feel good and helps to clear your mind. View our health and wellbeing videos here: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLbUORZTpmWXk5-hyFy85F3WHTIGlyKxz>

### STRATEGIES TO STAY ACTIVE

Most of us find it difficult to put aside time for exercise but as little as 30 minutes of moderate activity every day will help you to sustain the physical and emotional demands of your caring role. There are many different options to suit your interests, fitness levels and budget.



**Keep Learning:** Try something new or rediscover a past interest. Learn to sew, read a new book, listen to a radio program or a podcast or take on a new role at work. Learn to play a musical instrument or do a computer course. Learning can be fun. It can give you a sense of achievement and build your confidence.

### **Be Aware**

Be aware of the world around you; notice the changing seasons and the beautiful sights, smells and sounds as you do your daily activities. Notice how you feel. Try this as you walk, eat lunch or wait for a bus or a train. Being aware of the 'here and now', paying attention to your feelings and thoughts, can help you feel calm and reduce stress. Watch our meditation and body awareness videos here:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dXAXx2CFSgc&list=PLbUORZTpmWXkrY4atUyriCBnKZbu0iENL&ab\\_channel=CarersNSW](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dXAXx2CFSgc&list=PLbUORZTpmWXkrY4atUyriCBnKZbu0iENL&ab_channel=CarersNSW)

**Help Others:** Do something kind for a friend or stranger. Smile at someone at the shops, hold a door open for someone, or check up on a friend by email, phone or in person. Helping others can give you a sense of purpose and belonging, build friendships and make your community a better place.

### **Mindfulness**

Mindfulness is the basic human ability to be fully present, aware of where we are and what we're doing, and not overly reactive or overwhelmed by what's going on around us. Mindfulness is about focussing on being aware of what you are sensing and feeling in the moment.

### **Mindfulness Check**

Spend half a minute or so on each of the questions below.

- What are you doing right now?
- Where is your mind right now?
- Is it focussed on what you're doing or elsewhere?
- How happy or unhappy are you right now?

How can mindfulness help?

- Reduces stress, anxiety, depression.
- Reduces insomnia, increases sense of well-being, reduces lethargy, increases energy both mentally and physically.
- Effective for pain management
- Sharpens memory- increases focus and attention
- Increases empathy and compassion and improves relationships
- Creates clearer more focused thinking
- Improves self-belief and emotional resilience

### **Click here to download infographic: Key attitudes of mindfulness**

- Non-judging: Be kind to yourself and try not to judge yourself too harshly. Become aware of the constant stream of judgement and reactions to inner and outer experiences.

- Patience: Patience demonstrates that we accept the fact that things sometimes unfold in their own time.
- Beginner's mind: Remaining open and curious allows us to be receptive to new possibilities and prevents us from getting stuck in the rut of our own expertise
- Trust: Develop a basic trust with yourself and your feelings. Know it's okay to make mistakes
- Non-striving: The goal is to be with yourself right here, right now. Pay attention to what is unfolding without trying to change anything
- Acceptance: See things as they are. This sets the stage for remaining calm and composed in your life no matter what is happening
- Letting go: When we pay attention to our inner experience, we discover there are certain thoughts, emotions and situations the mind wants to hold onto. Let your experience be what it is right now.

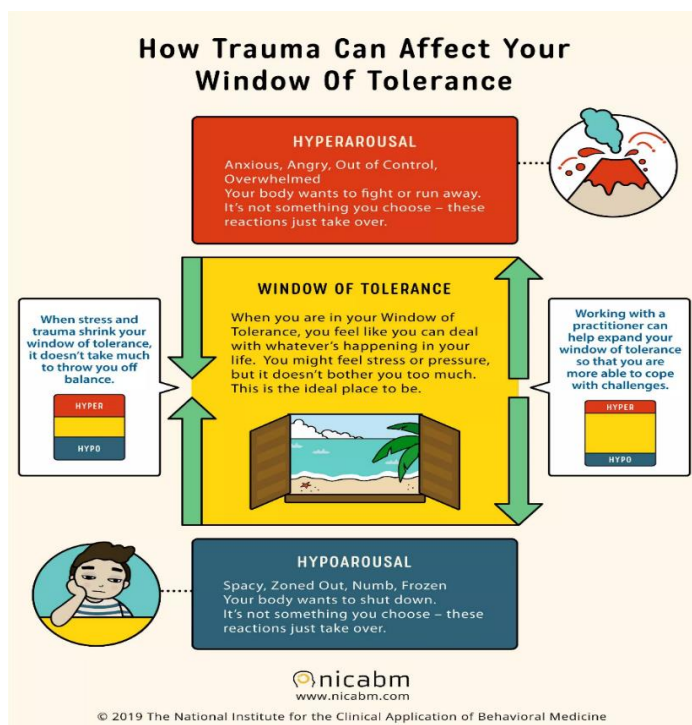
### Art and Music Therapy

- Tuning into art or music is known to have therapeutic effects on the mind. Using visual art such as painting, drawing or incorporating music by playing various instruments to improve health and wellbeing is called art and music therapy.
- While music often helps with improving mood, reducing stress, anxiety and depression, and maintaining sleep, art therapy can help with improving social and communication skills.
- You could join a peer support group through Carer Gateway or any local groups in your community and run art sessions where participants freely draw and paint and later on have discussions. You could also tune into some online videos to learn to draw.
- You can listen into your favourite music or join some group to learn any music instrument.

### Window of Tolerance

The window of tolerance is a concept to describe the optimal zone for a person to function in everyday life. When a person is operating within this zone or window, they can effectively manage and cope with their emotions.

For people who have experienced trauma, it is often difficult to regulate emotions and the window where they can function effectively becomes quite narrow. The stress of a traumatic memory or trigger may cause them to be pushed out of their window of tolerance. Even seemingly minor stressors can cause them to dissociate, get angry, or feel anxious – leading them to be pushed out of the optimal window of tolerance.



IF YOU ARE EXPERIENCING HEIGHTENED EMOTIONS OF:	YOU COULD TRY:
Anger outbursts Fear Anxiety Emotional overwhelm Panic Hypervigilance- state of increased alertness Tight muscles “Deer in the headlights” freeze	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diaphragmatic breathing (deep and slow tummy breathing)</li> <li>• Drinking from a straw</li> <li>• Throwing a therapy / yoga ball at a blank wall or outside wall</li> <li>• Jumping on a trampoline or mini trampoline</li> <li>• Weighted blanket that puts a gentle pressure on your body to calm your nerves.</li> <li>• Warm water</li> <li>• shaking or stomping out excess energy</li> <li>• Therapy / yoga ball (rolling along back when a person is lying face down on mat – gentle but firm pressure)</li> <li>• Heavy work (lifting, pulling, push-ups, wheelbarrow races, crab walk, leap frog etc.)</li> <li>• Music (soothing and calming music and sounds)</li> <li>• Comforting food</li> </ul>

IF YOU ARE EXPERIENCING LOW MOODS LIKE:	YOU COULD TRY:
Depression* Numbness Emptiness Flaccid body Blank stare Inability to speak* Dissociation*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anything that stimulates the senses!</li> <li>• Smelling essential oils (smell is a quick way to lift your mood and make you feel good)</li> <li>• Chewy crunchy food</li> <li>• Use of sensory shaker (ball pit) for tactile input</li> <li>• Movement</li> <li>• Jumping on a trampoline or mini trampoline</li> <li>• Gently sitting and bouncing on therapy ball (simulating rocking motion)</li> <li>• Rocking chair</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weighted blanket can give comfort by providing the right amount of gentle pressure and warmth.</li> <li>• Finger painting</li> <li>• Water play with a straw (blowing through the straw)</li> <li>• Dancing and music</li> </ul>
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*\* If symptoms like depression, dissociation or inability to speak persist, you may need additional support. You can contact Beyond Blue on 1300 22 4636 to speak to a professional or visit <https://www.beyondblue.org.au/> for more information.*

## Tips for Carers in Workplaces

[Click here to download infographic: Tips for carers at workplaces](#)

- **BALANCE:** Take small regular breaks at work. Set up a reminder on your phone or calendar to walk away from your desk and do some breathing exercises for about 30 seconds or fill up your drink bottle or do simple stretches.  
Maintain work-life balance. Switch work off at the end of the day and bring your focus back to home life.
- **PHYSICAL HEALTH:** Maintain physical health by being physically active. You could do gentle exercise, go for walk or a swim.
- **MENTAL HEALTH PROMOTION:** Find out if your workplace has an Employee Assistance Program or policies that better support and promote mental health. If you're looking to start a new job, look for workplaces promoting mental health and wellbeing for staff.
- **FLEXIBILITY:** Double check with your employer as to what supports are available for carers, for example flexible working hours, leave entitlements, working from home or job sharing.  
**CONNECT:** Connect with your colleagues and go for a walk with them during your lunch break, if possible. Notice other carers at your workplace in similar situations, connect with them and form an informal peer support group.
- **MINDFULNESS:** Take your headphones off, stand up from your computer or another work task you are doing, and pay attention to the sights, smells, conversations and things going on around you.
- **STRESS RELAEASE:** Use stress release strategies during free time (such as while travelling to and from work, during lunch-time) like practising mindfulness/ meditation, listening to podcasts or music, reading a book or chatting with a friend or a family member over the phone.
- **RESPIRE:** Try to plan ahead to take some time off just for yourself. You can contact Carer Gateway to arrange for planned respite care options at <https://www.carergateway.gov.au/respite>. Organise leave from work and respite care at the same time to take a break.
- **SLEEP HYGIENE:** Improve your sleep by cutting down on caffeine and alcohol, sticking to a regular sleep pattern, avoiding screen-use just before bed, and cutting down on naps during the day.

To get more information on your rights as a carer at work:  
[Click here to download infographic: Your rights at work](#)

## Tips for Carers at Home

[Click here to download infographic: Tips for carers at home](#)

- **BE INFORMED** of the challenges associated with your caring role. Learn more about the needs of the person you are caring for by doing some research or linking in with a specialist group, talking to the GP, and discussing with the care recipient.
- **SHARE CARING RESPONSIBILITY:** Do not overburden yourself; seek practical and emotional support as and when needed. Do not feel afraid to ask for help. Involve other members of the family to share caring responsibilities.
- **ONLINE TRAINING:** Access online education and training to better understand caring situations.  
Do a short course on mindfulness, Yoga, Tai-chi, or listen to a guided lesson online.
- **JOIN A PEER SUPPORT GROUP:** Join a peer support group or do a course through a Community Neighbourhood House or the local newspaper.
- **EXPRESS GRATITUDE:** Before going to bed, think of two new things you are genuinely appreciative for, such as the sunshine, flowers in the garden, the nice park you can walk to, your good friends, etc.
- **CONNECT WITH OTHERS:** Stay connected with your family and friends who can encourage and support you. Make sure that you socialise and do things that you enjoy regularly.
- **RESPIRE CARE:** Use respite care options as and when needed. 'Respite' means taking a break. If you get sick or hurt and you cannot look after someone, then emergency respite services can help you. Emergency respite services will find ways to look after the person you care for while you have a break. Planned respite care can help you plan for regular breaks to rest and recharge. You can organise planned and emergency respite through Carer Gateway at <https://www.carergateway.gov.au/respite>. Engage in soothing behaviours such as listening to your choice of music or podcasts.  
Take little breaks and go out of the house just to get some fresh air, for a short walk or do some simple exercises.
- **BE REALISTIC:** Be sensible about what you reasonably can and cannot do. Try to prioritise and organise tasks by making a weekly list, for example. Ensure that this is realistic and fair, and that it includes time for yourself and others as well as the person you are caring for.
- **MAINTAIN PROPER SLEEP CYCLE:** Ensure that you have a proper sleep cycle. Cutting down on caffeine and alcohol, going to bed and waking up at the same time every day, avoiding screen-use just before bed, and cutting down on naps during the day can help you get a proper sleep.

## Appendix A: Glossary of terms

TERM	DEFINITION
Carer Support Group	If you are a carer and would like to meet other carers, then you may like to consider joining a carer support group. These groups provide an opportunity for people with similar experiences to get together and learn from each other by sharing experiences, feelings, ideas, concerns, information and problems. They are also a great way to take a break and socialise.
Employee Assistance Program	An Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a work-based intervention program designed to enhance the emotional, mental and general psychological wellbeing of all employees and includes services for immediate family members. The aim is to provide preventive and proactive interventions for the early detection, identification and/or resolution of both work and personal problems that may adversely affect performance and wellbeing.
Respite Care	Also known as short-term care, respite care is a form of support for carers or the person they care for. It gives the carer the opportunity to attend to everyday activities and have a break from their caring role and the care recipient a break from their usual care arrangements. Respite care may be given informally by friends, family or neighbours, or by formal respite services.
Self-care	The World Health Organization defines self-care as: “the ability of individuals, families, and communities to promote health, prevent disease, maintain health, and to cope with illness and disability with or without the support of a healthcare provider.” It is the practise of individuals looking after their own health using the knowledge and information available to them.
Specialist Group	Specialist groups are specific support groups (for example, dementia, Parkinson’s disease etc.) where group members share similar experiences, expert knowledge, strategies to cope, available supports and service options etc.
SPIRE	SPIRE is a model for wellbeing that considers a person’s wellbeing as a whole and stands for Spiritual, Physical, Intellectual, Relational and Emotional wellbeing. The SPIRE model focuses on attaining the greatest level of wellbeing and helps you become grounded.
Tailored Support Package	Tailored support packages are designed to provide you with services and support specific to your needs to help you in your caring role. Providing you (as the person providing care and support) with tailored support aims to give you time to balance your caring responsibilities and manage your own wellbeing so that you can continue to be there for those you care for.
Wellbeing	Wellbeing is a complex combination of a person’s physical, mental, emotional and social health factors and not just the absence of a disease or illness. Wellbeing is strongly linked to happiness and life satisfaction.
Work-life Balance	Work-life balance is the state of equilibrium where a person equally prioritises the demands of one’s career and the demands of one’s personal life.
Working Carers	A person who is in paid employment or self-employed and who provides unpaid care for a family member, relative or friend who has a disability, mental illness, drug and/or alcohol dependency, chronic condition, terminal illness or who is frail.



## Appendix B: Resources

### FACTSHEETS










*Click the links below to download infographics*

- **Tips to handle Carer Burnout**
- **5 ways to wellbeing**
- **Key approaches of mindfulness**
- **Tips for carers at home**
- **Tips for carers at workplaces**
- **Your rights at work**

### OTHER INFOGRAPHICS

1. SYMPTOMS FOR DETERIORATING MENTAL HEALTH

#### WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR

 <p>Feeling unhappy or depressed</p>	 <p>Feeling anxious or worried</p>	 <p>Angry or emotional outbursts</p>
 <p>Alcohol or substance abuse</p>	 <p>Changes in appetite or weight</p>	 <p>Withdrawing from friends and/or family</p>
 <p>Feeling worthless or guilty</p>	 <p>Increased tiredness or sleep problems</p>	 <p>Changes in behavior</p>

## 2. SELF CARE ACTIVITIES

### EXAMPLES OF SELF CARE ACTIVITIES



1. Take time out to stretch, go for a walk, do some moderate exercises each day.



2. Play music to lift your mood. Find time to express yourself through music or dance.



3. Use technology to help with shopping, staying in touch with family and friends.



4. Book in an activity you enjoy such as coffee with a friend, or getting your hair and nails done.



5. Set a time to enjoy arts, crafts or a calming activity like knitting, jigsaw puzzles or Sudoku.

### STRATEGIES FOR ACHIEVING BETTER MENTAL HEALTH

Where possible, try to implement these strategies:



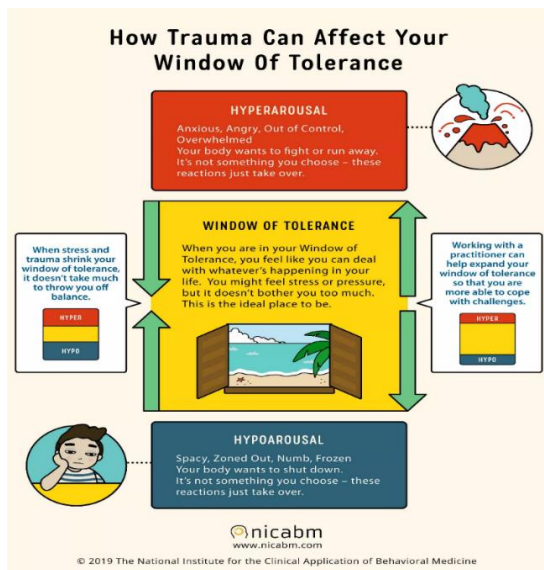
## 3. PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

### STRATEGIES TO STAY ACTIVE

Most of us find it difficult to put aside time for exercise but as little as 30 minutes of moderate activity every day will help you to sustain the physical and emotional demands of your caring role. There are many different options to suit your interests, fitness levels and budget.



#### 4. WINDOW OF TOLERANCE



#### 5. HEALTHY EATING FOR WORKING CARERS

##### STRATEGIES FOR BUSY PEOPLE



1. Plan your meals in advance, this can be a weekly or monthly plan. 
2. Reduce cooking time by making one pot meals like soups or stews. Cook extra so you have leftovers. 
3. Order groceries online and have them delivered to your door. 
4. Carry healthy snacks with you to keep your energy levels up and avoid temptation. 
5. Keep a well stocked fridge and pantry with pasta, canned goods. 
6. Consider meal delivery services like Tender Loving Cuisine or Hello Fresh. 

## Appendix C: Contacts

**Beyond Blue:** <https://www.beyondblue.org.au/>

Tel: 1300 22 4636 | 24x7 support service

Beyond Blue is an organisation promoting mental health and wellbeing, supporting people affected by depression, anxiety and suicide.

**Black Dog Institute:** <https://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/>

Tel: 02 9382 2991 | Mon to Fri (:00am to 5:00pm)

Black Dog Institute is a medical research institute that conducts mental health research and develops innovative tools, informative resources, digital apps and clinical services to discover new solutions and approaches to improve mental health within communities.

**Carer Gateway:** <https://www.carergateway.gov.au/>

Tel: 1800 422 737 | Mon to Fri 8:00am to 6:00pm

The Carer Gateway is a centralised gateway to carers that offers a range of services and supports, online and over the phone and in-person. Services to carers include Emergency Respite and Tailored Support Packages among many others.

**Carers NSW:** <https://www.carersnsw.org.au/>

Tel: 02 9280 4744 | Mon to Fri 9:00am to 5:00pm

Carers NSW provides information, education and training, resources and referrals to support carers.

**Head to Health:** <https://www.headtohealth.gov.au/>

Tel: 1800 595 212 | Mon to Fri 8:30am to 5:00pm

Head to Health can help you find digital mental health services from some of Australia's most trusted mental health organisations. Provided by the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care, Head to Health brings together apps, online programs, online forums, and phone services, as well as a range of digital information resources.

**Lifeline:** <https://www.lifeline.org.au/about/our-services/>

Tel: 13 11 14 | 24x7 support

Lifeline provides compassionate support for people in crisis and suicide prevention services.

**NSW Health:** <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/mentalhealth/>

Tel: 1800 011 511 | 24x7 support

The Mental Health Branch within the NSW Ministry of Health offers the Mental Health Line which is staffed by mental health professionals who can put you in contact with the most relevant mental health services.

**SANE Australia:** <https://www.sane.org/>

Tel: 1800 187 263 | Mon to Fri 10:00am to 10:00pm

SANE is the leading national mental health organisation for people with complex mental health issues in Australia and for the carers, families and friends that support them.