



Use this space for your own notes and thoughts.

2.2 Looking after yourself

Looking after yourself can include anything positive that makes you feel better. And as a support person, it's important to remind yourself that you matter too, and to take the time you need for your own wellbeing.

Your wellbeing is about how you feel as a whole person – it relates to doing things that are good for you physically, mentally, emotionally and socially – and make you feel strong and energised.

Your support role can change over time and so too will your own needs. Try to identify the things you can do to look after your own mental health and wellbeing. For example, know the small things you can do that make you feel good. It doesn't have to take long or be an organised activity, it could be something as simple as taking a hot shower, drawing or writing in a journal, walking to the end of the street and back, doing a crossword, or listening to your favourite music.

More ideas:

- Try to spend time with people you trust, such as friends or family members that are good at listening without judgement. If you can, limit the time you spend with people who make you feel down, or say “no” to activities that contribute to negative thoughts.
- Are there daily habits that need your attention? How's your sleep pattern? Are you eating well? Are you moving your body?
- When you can, go for a walk or do some light exercise – it's good for your mind. The endorphins (happy hormones) released by the brain and nervous system during physical activity can make you feel better.
- How do you take care of your emotional health? Can you find a group that provides some connection and 'me' time?

- You've probably heard about mindfulness and meditation. It can sound difficult and complicated but it doesn't need to be. Like getting confident at doing anything new, it takes frequent practice. Mindfulness is about learning to be more present within the moments of your day-to-day life and meditation can be as simple as sitting comfortably and focusing on your breathing for one minute. Google mindfulness and/or meditation. There's great apps to choose from too.
- If you have access to a computer and the internet, consider doing some of the **Carer Skills Modules at Carer Gateway**. There's a range of topics available, such as **Dealing with stress, Recharge and reconnect** or **Social connections** (each module takes 20-40 minutes). You can do these modules a few minutes at a time – you don't have to do a whole module at once. And you don't need to register to access the information.
- Join forums and chat groups to talk with other support people. Check out **Carer Gateway, Family Drug Support, MHFFTs Safe Spaces** or **Sane Australia**. (See Directory of Contacts pages 69-73).
- If you can, find a counsellor or other mental health professional that can listen to your needs so you can work together to come up with strategies to take care of your wellbeing.



Do I need a break?

It takes strength and courage to support someone with their mental health. It's important to take time for yourself to rest and recharge – some service providers call this respite.

Some signs you might need a break are:

- Feeling more anxious, sad, or reactive.
- Loss of enjoyment of hobbies or socialising.
- A change in your mood, appetite, sleep patterns.
- Feeling isolated and disconnected.
- Not really feeling anything at all.

It's healthy to take a break from your support role. It doesn't have to be 'formal respite'; options are limited in Tasmania, but it could involve:

- Asking another family member or friend if they can take over for a while. This might mean finding a person trusted both by you and the person you support. If this is impossible, can you set aside some time where you can step away from the support role?
- If you have a formal job, and you haven't already, can you apply for carer's leave?
- Can you write up a roster of support that involves the support of other family or friends? This could include the days and times they take over so you can have a break. Set aside a regular day a week or fortnight where another family member or friend takes over for you.
- Talking to the person you support to negotiate some time away.

**YOU MIGHT BE
ABLE TO GET
EMERGENCY RESPITE
BY CONTACTING THE
CARER GATEWAY ON
1800 422 737**

"The impact that my son has had on the household has been challenging to say the least. He is passive/aggressive, has a sense of entitlement, swears at me when he doesn't get his way, manipulates, bullies. I have asked him for mediation but he refuses. Here I am attempting to support his mental health at the expense of my own." - Jose, 54.

