

Carers Mental Health

Carers experience higher rates of mental ill health than the general population. Carers appear to suffer from at least moderate levels of mental health difficulties. Being someone's carer probably only describes part of your relationship with them. You may also be a parent, partner, sister, brother, child, friend or other family member. This relationship can be just as (or more) important to you. You may also have other caring roles as well, for example as a parent to other children.

Supporting others can be mentally and physically exhausting. The time you spend caring can really vary too – some people look after someone for just a short time and others find themselves caring for someone for the long term.



Did you know that 3 in 5 of us will care for someone in our lifetime?



A carer is anyone who cares, unpaid, for a family member or friend who due to illness, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction, cannot cope without their support. Many people do not see themselves as family carers.

Do you help a family member, child, friend or neighbour that:

- is frail
- has a disability or special needs
- has a chronic illness and/or
- has a mental illness
- has dementia/Alzheimer's
- has a substance misuse problem with drugs or alcohol



Carers can often "neglect" their own wellbeing

Caring can be physically and psychologically very demanding:

- Having had no training for the job things are more difficult
- Physical injuries such as a back injury due to helping a someone out of bed
- Heightened stress and anxiety affecting both mental and physical health
- Poor sleep
- Financial Strain

Carers often feel they cannot be missed as who else would do the caring? Therefore, carers often ignore any symptoms and try to avoid seeing their GP or postpone necessary treatment for themselves.



Top Tips to Manage Stress

- Exercise. This is a high priority for **managing** stress....
- Know that you are safe....
- Trigger the **relaxation response**: 10 to 20 minutes sitting in a comfortable position, quiet or silence, eyes closed or fixed on an object and deep, consistent, slow breathing.



Meditate:

Download a meditation or relaxation app or do deep breathing exercises.



Keep a journal:

Release tension by writing down thoughts.



Make time for what you enjoy:

Pick up an old hobby or take up a new one.

Watch a funny movie:

Laughter can be a great medicine.



Find a support group:

Talk about struggles and triumphs with people who truly understand.



Support is available, but there are often barriers to getting help. Research has found that one such barrier is that many carers do not recognise themselves as carers. If you're looking after someone, regardless of whether you think you fit into any particular definition of a carer, there is support out there. You could try speaking to an organisation like [Carers UK](#), or your GP.

Support doesn't have to come from an outside organisation. Even talking things through with friends and family will help. They may not realise how your care duties are impacting you.



Talk to your employer:

If you're employed, it might be worth talking to your employer about your caring duties, if you feel able. There might be measures they can put in place, such as flexible working, to make sure your work/life balance is manageable.

Maintain your own hobbies and interests:

When you're looking after someone, it's easy to lose sight of your own passions, hobbies and interests. These are part of who you are, and although time pressures may have cut your leisure time down, it's important to make a little room for these interests. Whether it's popping on your favourite album or setting aside an hour or two a week for a hobby, you'll find it makes a world of difference to your state of mind.



Looking after mental health and wellbeing

- Keep in touch and connect
- Work out a regular routine
- Engage in varied activities
- Exercise and stay active
- Plan to overcome problems
- Manage anxiety and worry
- Practice regular relaxation

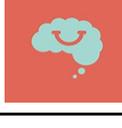
Explore the options for practical and financial help:

You might be entitled to financial help – whether in the form of benefits or help from non-governmental agencies. There may also be respite care facilities available, or assistance in making home adaptations. [Carers UK](#) or your local [Citizens Advice Bureau](#) can help you assess your entitlements.

Our recommended resources (click for direct access):

NHS Inform	Offers the most up-to-date advice on dealing varying mental health difficulties, including the 5 Steps to Mental Wellbeing. Please visit: NHS Inform
Wellbeing	Our website offers a variety of self-help materials, groups, and courses for all sorts of problems that you may be facing. Anyone can download the self- help materials. Please visit: Wellbeing Website Glasgow
Mental Health Foundation	A range of content designed to give you more information about mental health and to help you to look after your mental health. Please visit: Your Mental Health - Mental Health Foundation
NHS Every Mind Matters	Interactive website providing you the opportunity to complete a short quiz which creates a Mind Plan of what you can do to improve your mental health. Please visit: Every Mind Matters
Psych Central	Run by mental health professionals offering reliable, trusted information to individuals struggling with a mental health. There is also an excellent quiz section allowing you to find out more about your symptoms and how to manage these. Please visit: PsychCentral for Mental Health
MIND	Information hub provides advice on how to support your mental wellbeing. Please visit: MIND Information Hub
SAMH	Hub of information and guidance about looking after mental health. Please visit: SAMH Guidance for Mental Health

Useful Apps:

	Mind Shift	Rather than trying to avoid anxious feelings, Mind Shift stresses the importance of changing how you think about anxiety. It can encourage you to take charge of your life, ride out intense emotions, and face challenging situations
	SAM	SAM might be perfect for you if you're interested in self-help, but meditation isn't your thing. Users are prompted to build their own 24-hour anxiety toolkit that allows you to track anxious thoughts and behaviour over time and learn 25 different self-help techniques.
	Happify	Need a happy fix? With its psychologist-approved mood-training program, the Happify app is your fast-track to a good mood. Try various engaging games, activity suggestions, gratitude prompts and more to train your brain as if it were a muscle, to overcome negative thoughts
	Headspace	The Headspace app makes meditation simple. Learn the skills of mindfulness and meditation by using this app for just a few minutes per day. You gain access to hundreds of meditations on everything from stress and anxiety to sleep and focus.
	Calm	Calm provides people experiencing stress and anxiety with guided meditations, sleep stories, breathing programs, and relaxing music.
	Smiling Mind	Smiling mind is a way to practice daily meditation and mindfulness exercises from any device. This is helpful during times of stress and is a fun and unique way to help you put a smile on your mind.