

# Looking After Yourself and Your Feelings

## **Looking After Yourself and Your Feelings**

Caring for someone is almost always hard work and can put a great deal of strain on your emotional or physical health. You will know that looking after someone gives great satisfaction but you may find it physically or mentally exhausting as well as a financial drain.

You can spend a lot of time travelling between home and the home of the person you care for; you may have had to give up work; you may not get much or any time to yourself; you too, may be elderly or disabled.

You may be affected by feelings like isolation, guilt, stress, depression, resentment and anger. It is important to try and find ways of dealing with these feelings.

### **Tiredness**

Carers can often complain of feeling exhausted by looking after the person they care for. The hours spent caring are often well above what any paid worker would tolerate.

### **Anger**

You may also feel anger and resentment towards the person you care for because of the restrictions which looking after them has placed on your life. Anger is a natural and understandable reaction to certain situations and you cannot make it go away by holding onto it and denying its existence.

If you find that your anger gets too much for you, try to walk away from the situation, even if only for a few minutes, take some deep breaths to calm yourself and try not to feel guilty because you have these feelings. Some people find it helpful to think of themselves and the person they care for sharing resentment against the disease or disability, rather than you, the carer, having resentment against the person cared for.

### **Stress**

It is very easy for carers to lose sight of their own identity, and forget to think about what they want. Caring can be very stressful. The effects of stress can take various forms, but common signs include: -

- poor sleep;
- inappropriate aggression;
- irritability;
- over eating or under eating;
- cannot settle down;
- loss of self esteem;
- exhaustion;
- feelings of loneliness or isolation;
- lack of concentration.

### **Change**

Coming to terms with any new role takes time and constant re-adjustment.

If you are a new carer, try to look for and accept as much practical and emotional support as you can. Carers who seem to be taking on their role with ease sometimes discover that, after a few months, they are not coping well but find it hard to ask for help because, by then, everyone thinks they are!

Those who found it very difficult in the beginning, and thought they could never manage, can feel quite confident and assured after a few months, if they have adequate support and encouragement.

As a carer you may have been involved in making major changes in your life or having to make frequent adjustments, depending on the well being of the person you care for. You may feel confused, frustrated or angry at times, as your best efforts to help may be met with indifference or opposition. When the health or competence of a person you are caring for goes through a process of gradual deterioration, sometimes over many years, you may regularly experience feelings of loss as your relationship changes.

### **Own Needs**

Many carers are at risk of neglecting themselves and their own potential as individual people. It is understandable that through devotion, duty or the realisation or assumption that there is nobody else to share the caring role, carers can become so involved in helping the person they care for, that they forget about themselves. The consequences of this self-neglect may not be fully apparent until the caring responsibility ceases, by which time the carer may have little social, practical or financial support.

### **Practical Tips**

Think about yourself - you need space, time and something that allows you to retain or regain your self-esteem. You could consider contacting one of the self-help or voluntary groups in the area to discuss your situation, the implications of being a carer and talk to people who have had similar experiences. There are a number of carers support groups in Pembrokeshire, please see the list of organisations at the end.

Learn how to set limits and be more assertive in your dealings with members of your family, caring organisations and the cared for person; this could improve your own well being. You could consider taking up yoga, relaxation classes or other exercise programmes.

Consider making part of your life, however small, separate from your caring role by thinking about learning a new skill, taking up a leisure activity, doing voluntary work or thinking about employment.

Try not to neglect your own health. Do not put off seeing a doctor, dentist etc. when you need to.

You may want to ensure that people who provide services locally are made aware of the difficulties and problems which carers face, and become involved in helping to plan for these services. There are various forums you can join to offer your views on a regular basis that may be useful for future developments. You may need to ask for help with your caring (known as respite care) to be involved in a forum. For more information on getting involved please contact Keith Simcox, Health & Social Care Planning Facilitator at PAVS on 01437 769422

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**Contacts - Section I**

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**CARERS SUPPORT GROUPS IN PEMBROKESHIRE**

All the groups below are open to carers to attend. It is worth phoning the contact number for the group to check the details of the meeting before making a special journey. Most of the groups are very informal, have a mixture of speakers and discussions, occasionally organise social events and welcome new members. Most of the groups welcome ex-carers. Many carers value the chance to share their knowledge and experience with other people in similar situations. If you are a carer and you cannot find a group to suit you, please contact the Carers Development Worker on 01437 771196.

## Section I

<b>Name of Group</b>	<b>Contact Person</b>	<b>Who is the group for</b>	<b>When and where does the group meet</b>
Outreach Support Group	Dave Watkin 01437 769701	Any carer or ex-carer living in Pembrokeshire	The 1 <sup>st</sup> Tuesday of each month at Meyler House Haverfordwest
North Pembrokeshire Carers Support Group	David Cryer 01348 872265 Patricia Nathan 01348 873928	All carers living in North Pembrokeshire	The 2 <sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of each month - every other month at Wintern Day Centre
Carers Support Group	Frances Rayner 01646 699257 or Beryl Noyce 01646 699258	Carers of elderly people with mental health problems	The 3 <sup>rd</sup> Thursday of each month in Havenhurst Residential Home Milford Haven at 2pm
Narberth & Tenby Carers Support Group	Jackie Aitken 01834 861379 Beryl Noyce 01646 699258	Carers of elderly people with dementia and other mental health problems in South Pembrokeshire	The 1 <sup>st</sup> Tuesday of each month at Narberth Health Centre
Pembrokeshire Parent Carers High Dependency Needs Support Group	Carol Mason 01834 831833 Dave Watkin 01437 769701 website - <a href="http://www.highsupportneeds.org.uk">www.highsupportneeds.org.uk</a>	Parents and Carers of children and adults with learning disabilities	Flexible social outings/meetings every 3 weeks - contact Carol or Dave for details
Pembrokeshire Parent/Carers Association	Joan Ward 01646 636388 Pat Jameson 01646 683053	Carers and parents of people with learning disabilities	The 3 <sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of each month, alternating between Milford Haven and Pembroke
Parkinsons Society	Sybil Lancaster 01646 690063	Carers of people who have Parkinsons	The 4 <sup>th</sup> Saturday of the month - and every Wednesday at the HOPE Centre
Pembs Cancer Support Centre	Barbara Miller 01646 683078	Carers of people with cancer	Support on an individual basis at present but can link in with groups if wanted
Mental Health Carers Support Group 'Carers in Mind'	Ann Waide 01348 840310 Allan & Joy Ross 01646 687113	Carers of people with mental health problems	The 2 <sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of each month in Haverfordwest Mind Resource Centre.
Parent Action Group	Ann Barker 01348 873968	Mainly carers of children and young people with disabilities	Quarterly at the Children's Centre Haverfordwest
Special Interest Group in Autism (SIGA)	Helen Brandrick 07917774630 Helen Williams 01437 741228	Parents of children and young people with autism	Every half-term

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Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) Support Group	Olivia Davies 01437 765705	Carers of children and young people with ADHD	The 1 <sup>st</sup> Tuesday of each month in The Glen, Haverfordwest
Parents TLC	Gill Lee-Munson 01437 762885 01437 773988 Box no 2885 (messages)	Parents of children with life-threatening or long-term illnesses	1 <sup>st</sup> Thursday of each month at the Child Health Unit, Withybush Hospital
Fishguard & District Special Needs Soccer & Leisure Club	Mandi Foot 01348 873797 Nina Williams 01348 872381	Families of children with special needs	Various locations for coffee/lunch/meetings Activities for children on regular basis
Haverfordwest Carers Group	Vicky Richards 01437 773382	Carers of older people with mental health problems	1 <sup>st</sup> Monday of every month at the Canolfan Bro Cerwyn – Room 2
Fishguard & St Davids Carers Group	Angela Dowson 01646 699258 Joanne Philips 01348 872289	Carers of older people with mental health problems	Last Wednesday of the month 3pm at Ty-Bran bungalow
Headway	01437 765764	People with head injuries, their friends and carers	2 <sup>nd</sup> Thursday of every month at the Haverfordwest Rugby Club
Pembroke Carers Group	Cath Weathall 07799891367	Carers of elderly people with mental health problems	1 <sup>st</sup> Monday of each month - new group so phone for details
Young Adult Carers Group	01437 779188	Young adult carers 18+	New group - phone for details