

WHO CARES? WE DO

GETTING INFORMED

DEALING WITH STRESS?

WHO CAN HELP?
LOOKING AFTER YOURSELF

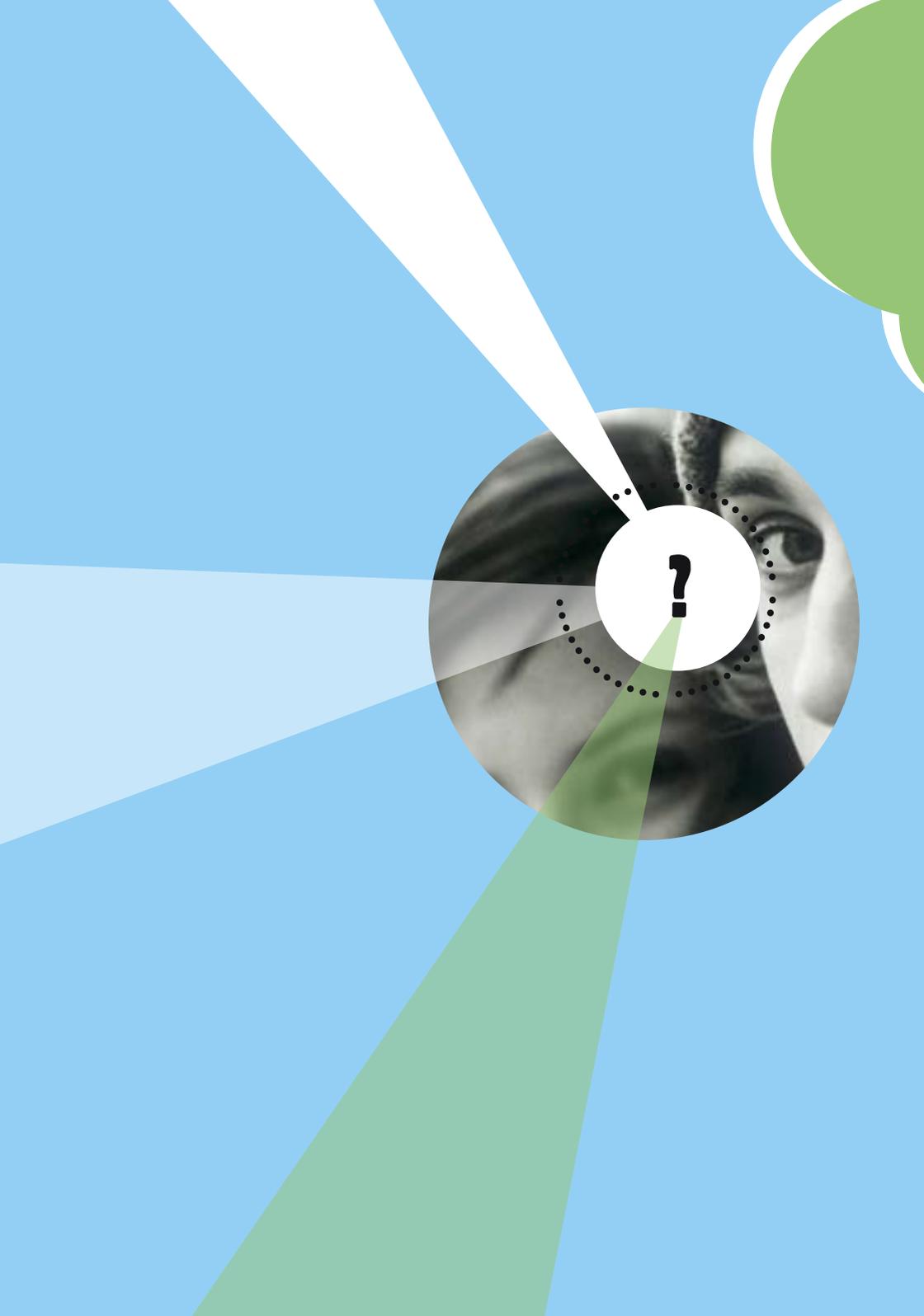


INFO & ADVICE FOR YOUNG CARERS



An Australian Government Initiative





CONTENTS

Young carer stories	2
Who are young carers?	4
Looking after you	5
How can I look after myself better?	5
Dealing with feelings	8
Loss and grief	10
Dealing with stress	12
Relationships	14
Taking time out	16
Coping with school	19
Caring safely	20
Dealing with emergencies	22
Who can you turn to?	24
Support from your doctor	25
Community Health Centres	25
Help from your pharmacist	26
Info and support	27
Who can help your relative?	28
Who can help your family?	29
A word on child protection	29
Who can help you?	30
How does the Australian Government help?	31
How can I find the right service for me?	34
Making complaints about services	35
Call for help	36

This info mag was developed as part of Carers Australia's Supporting Young Carers Project, funded by the Australian Government Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.



HI, I'M KEITH, I'm 9 and I live with my Nan, my Pop and my older sister Sammy. My Pop has got dementia and that means that sometimes he's forgetful. Like this one time he got up early in the morning and started walking into town thinking he was 10 years old and was going off to school. I love my Pop – especially when we go fishing together. We sit near the river and he tells me the same joke like ten times, but I still laugh. Sometimes it's hard because we live in a small town and there's no-one around to help when things are bad.

HEY, I'M CARLA and I'm 15. I live on the coast with my Dad. He's got depression and is a recovering alcoholic. That means that he used to drink all the time but now he doesn't. Dad's body isn't what it used to be – because of his drinking – and he gets sick a lot. I help out around the house and make sure he's OK. When I was little and Dad's drinking was really bad I used to get really scared. I told one of my teachers and she got my Dad some help. It was hard because I had to go and stay with another family for a while but I'm back now and things are OK.



G'DAY, I'M ALEX, I'm 20 and I care for my older brother who has a brain injury after being in a car accident and my Mum who has a problem with her kidneys. I hate it when we go to the doctors and they tell me to wait in the other room. Mum doesn't speak English and she needs for me to explain stuff but the doctor treats me like a little kid even though I'm the one who does everything. Last year I got a job, and my boss is pretty cool, but I've almost used up all my sick days looking after my family when they're unwell. I wish I could get some help so I didn't have to do everything.

YOUNG CARER STORIES



I'M KIM and I'm 11. I care for my Mum who's got bipolar. I don't really know what that means except that sometimes Mum's really sad and then sometimes she's alright. Sometimes Mum feels really sick and won't come out of her room for a couple of days. I help her by making tea and washing up and I go next door where I help my friend – she cares for her Mum too. It's cool to have someone else who looks after their Mum cos they understand what you're going through. We look out for each other too.



Hi, I'M JESS, I'm 22 and I care for my Mum who has kidney problems and my daughter, Kerry, who has cancer. I've helped look after Mum for years – with cooking and cleaning and making sure that she's feeling OK. I also care for my daughter by taking her to doctors appointments and sitting with her through the treatments. I know that Kerry isn't going to be around forever but she's got so much courage and wants to live so badly that I look at the positives too. I'm just so glad I can spend time with her.

I'M CRAIG, I'm 14 and I care for my little brother, Andy. He's got autism. He can't talk much but he's really good on the piano. I have to help him at home and make sure he doesn't hurt himself. Sometimes it's a real pain because I can't go out skating with my friends but Andy makes me laugh and I can't be angry with him for too long. The thing I hate most is when people tease me at school about my brother. They don't know what it's like to have autism or what it's like to care. I met this guy in Year 10 who is also a young carer and he told me to find him if I was having any problems – he watches out for me, which is great.



WHO ARE YOUNG CARERS?

Young carers are children and young people up to 25 years of age who help care in families where someone has an illness, a disability, a mental illness or who has an alcohol or other drug problem.

The person they help care for might be a parent, a sibling, their own child, a grandparent or other relative, or maybe a friend. They might help out with cleaning or cooking, getting their relative around the house, helping with medicines, keeping them safe, showering or dressing or watching out to make sure that they're feeling OK.

Across Australia, over 390,000 children and young people help care for their relatives.

WHAT'S IT LIKE TO BE A YOUNG CARER?

Many young carers tell us that caring can be a great thing to do – that they're proud of who they are and what they do and that they've built up a whole swag

of useful skills. Sometimes though young carers say that caring can affect how they feel, how much time they get to spend with friends, doing schoolwork or holding down a job, and that often they need some help.

WHAT'S THIS INFO PACK FOR?

This info pack is for young carers. It's about giving you tips on how to look after yourself and the person you're caring for and about how to get help when you need it.

WHO PUT IT TOGETHER?

This pack was developed by Carers Australia – the national voice for carers in Australia. It's role is to make sure that carers, of all ages, are given opportunities to get the help they need and to be supported to achieve their own goals.



LOOKING AFTER YOU

When you spend most of your time looking after other people it's easy to forget to look after yourself too. But it's really important – because unless you're fit, healthy and relaxed you can't do a great deal for others.

Looking after yourself will help you keep going – even when times are tough.

HOW CAN I LOOK AFTER MYSELF BETTER?

Know that you are not alone

With lots of things to do and not much time to get out, sometimes you might feel very alone. In times like these, it's good to talk to someone about how you're feeling and to spend time with others who understand.

Just talking to someone can be a great relief

Your local Commonwealth Carer Resource Centre has workers who are there to listen and to link you up with other young carers for support groups, activities, camps and lots more! You can contact them on 1800 242 636*.



FIND OUT ABOUT WHAT'S GOING ON

Young carers tell us the thing that makes them most stressed or concerned is not knowing what's going on.

GET OUT AND ABOUT

Try to take some time out every once in a while. Get away from home and do something that makes you feel good – like laughing with friends, playing sport, watching a movie or playing in a band.

If you feel guilty or uncomfortable about leaving your relative at home by themselves then you might:

- Organise another family member or friend to come in and help so you can have time off
- Call your local Commonwealth Carer Respite Centre on 1800 059 059* and organise for a worker to help out
- Talk to your family or someone you trust about how you're feeling.

I WENT TO THIS GROUP FOR KIDS LIKE US AND IT WAS AWESOME! FOR THE FIRST TIME I KNEW THAT IT WAS COOL TO HAVE A BROTHER WITH A DISABILITY.



LOOK AFTER YOUR BODY

It's always important that you look after your body by:

- Eating well throughout the day
- Getting enough sleep
- Having regular exercise
- Taking time out to relax and unwind
- Laughing
- Having regular checkups with your doctor.

Caring can sometimes puts your body under a lot of pressure. Caring for long hours can be exhausting, lifting heavy things can put strain on your back and not getting enough sleep can be tiring.

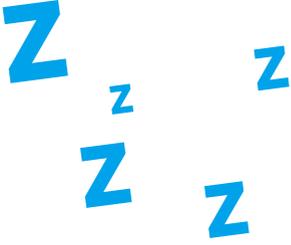
In each state and territory there are young carer workers who can help you come up with other tips on how to look after yourself. Contact them through the Commonwealth Carer Resource Centre on 1800 242 636*.

LOOK AFTER YOUR MIND ← ← ← ← ←

As well as having a healthy and fit body your mind needs a workout too. You can do this by:

- Learning how to relax
- Taking time to chill out with friends
- Dealing with issues so you don't have to spend all your time worrying
- Talking to people about how you're feeling
- Writing down your thoughts and ideas in a diary
- Find other people who are in the same boat as yourself.

Your local Commonwealth Carer Resource Centre can send you a relaxation CD with some tips on how to cope with stress. Call them on 1800 242 636*.



GET ENOUGH SLEEP

Sometimes young carers can find it hard to sleep. This might be because they feel they don't have enough time after juggling caring, working and cleaning around the home or because when it's time to head to bed they just can't sleep.

Neither of these situations are ideal. Most of us need at least 8 hours sleep every night otherwise it's really hard to concentrate during the day, to do well at school or keep an eye out for other people. People who don't sleep well are also more likely to suffer from depression and feelings of sadness. Sleep helps keep us healthy and re-energises us for the next day.

Here are some things that might help you sleep better:

- Get some help with your caring so that you have more time to do other things you need to do (see the section on page 15 for some ideas on how to do this)
- Set a regular bedtime to get your body into a pattern
- Get lots of exercise during the day (try not to exercise just before bed – that'll keep you alert)
- Keep away from coffee and soft drinks after about 4pm and cut down (or better still, quit) smoking
- Relax before bedtime – play some soft music and dim the lights

- Try not to nap during the day
- Avoid all-nighters
- Put a notebook near your bed where you can write down any things you may need to remember or any concerns that are keeping you awake – 'sleeping on it' does actually work!
- Do things that build your self esteem and have some fun – you're more likely to get reasonable sleep if you're feeling good about yourself.

If you are worried about not sleeping talk to your GP or a counsellor. They can give you some help and come up with some other ideas that might help too.



**I LIKE TO
TAKE A LONG
HOT BATH AND
LISTEN TO MY
FAVOURITE
MUSIC.**

REWARD YOURSELF EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE

Caring can be hard work and it can take a lot of energy, courage and love to get through sometimes. It's important to stop and remember how awesome what you are doing is and to reward yourself for a great job done.

Here are some rewards that other young carers treat themselves to every once in a while:

- Listen to your favourite CD with the phone off the hook
- Write down ten things you're proud about yourself in a diary (start with 5 if you find it hard)
- Check out a movie or take a night off with a friend
- Buy yourself something nice
- Rearrange your bedroom
- Go to the pool or gym and have some time to yourself
- Cook your favourite meal followed by a delicious dessert
- Go through your photo album
- Go to the local fun park, arcade or fair
- Have absolutely no plans for the weekend.

Some of these rewards might cost money or you might not know how to organise them. Contact your local young carers worker through the Commonwealth Carer Resource Centre on 1800 242 636* – they might be able to help.



WHEN I'VE DONE SOMETHING I'M PROUD OF I PUT ASIDE AT LEAST AN HOUR TO WORK ON MY CAR. I LOVE WHEN IT'S ALL DONE UP AND I CRUISE AROUND TOWN.

“

When my Mum first got sick I didn't know how to handle it. I used to get angry all the time for no reason and I used to take it out on people at school. Only after like six weeks on detention did I work out that something was wrong and that I needed to talk about it. I went to this young carers group and found out that it was OK to feel angry but that I needed to deal with it better.

”

DEALING WITH FEELINGS

Young carers can feel a whole range of emotions when caring for a relative or friend. Some young carers tell us that they feel proud about the way they help care for their relative. Others share times when they felt angry, sad or frustrated. There's no such thing as 'right feelings' or 'wrong feelings' – it's just how you feel.



As a young carer, you might feel:

- **Shock** (when you first find out that your relative is unwell)
- **Confused** (when you're not given the information you need)
- **Guilty** (when you need a break, when you're not coping or when you ask for help)
- **Love and commitment** (for your relative or friend and other people who help you)
- **Frustration or anger** (when you think others aren't doing their share or when you miss out on doing things you want to do)
- **Fear** (when you don't know what's happening)
- **Excitement** (when things are going well)
- **Sad** (when you think about the things your relative might miss out on)
- **Pride** (about all the great things you do).

Feeling any of these emotions isn't a bad thing but sometimes we have to think about how we express them. For example, when we're angry we need to work out how to release the anger in a way that doesn't hurt us, other people or things around us. Here are some things that other young carers suggest might help:

- Listen to music
- Go for a run or do something physical
- Pull out weeds in the garden
- Scream into a pillow
- Take a few deep breaths (try not to hyperventilate!)
- Call a friend and talk for hours.

You need to deal with some of your other emotions too and often the best way of doing this is to talk about them with someone you can trust. Here are a few suggestions of people you might contact (there are more listed on page 25):

- A friend, neighbour, brother, sister or other family member you trust
- A counsellor or teacher at school
- A youth worker down at the local youth centre
- Your sporting coach, youth group leader or pastor
- Someone from Kids Help Line on 1800 551 800 or Lifeline on 13 1114
- Your local Commonwealth Carer Resource Centre on 1800 242 636*.



WHAT IF I'M NOT COPING?

Most young carers will tell you that there are times when they feel they're just not coping anymore. It's OK to feel like this – but it's a good idea to do something about it like:

- Talk it through with a friend, someone in your family, a counsellor or youth worker
- Let your GP know at your next appointment
- Call the Commonwealth Carer Resource Centre on 1800 242 636*
- Talk to someone at Kids Help Line on 1800 55 1800 or Lifeline on 13 1144. They're available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.



LOSS AND GRIEF

All of us experience loss or grief at some time in our life. We might lose a pet, move schools and lose touch with our friends, break up with a girlfriend or boyfriend or move to a new home in a new town. Loss and grief can make us feel empty, or sad, or angry, or relieved or a mixture of all of these – everyone can feel something different, at different times.

Young carers often tell us that as well as losing these relationships and opportunities that they also experience other types of grief and loss including:

- No longer being able to do things with their relative that they might have enjoyed before
- Not having as much time to spend with their friends when they're caring
- Not being able to go to school or work
- Not being able to afford the things they used to do
- Missing out on some of the holidays, games and fun times they used to have with other family friends
- Missing other family members who move away because they can't cope
- Feeling empty when their relative moves into care
- Feeling upset and hurt when their relative dies.

Young carers can feel a whole range of different emotions when they lose someone, something, or some experience that they used to have. They might feel:

- **Angry or upset** – when they think they've been treated unfairly
- **Disappointed or let down** – when things didn't turn out the way they'd hoped
- **Sad or depressed** – when they really miss what they used to have
- **Confused** – when they don't understand why things happened the way they did
- **Overwhelmed** – when there's too much happening and too much to cope with
- **Resentful** – when they realise that they are missing out on other things.

Young carers might also feel other emotions like:

- **Relief** – when they know their relative isn't suffering any more
- **Hope** – that things will get better
- **Joy** – when they remember something special.

Accepting these emotions, both ones that make you feel good or bad, can be just as hard as accepting the thing that you've lost or are missing out on. Sometimes we dwell on it too much and feel guilty or ashamed about how we're feeling. We ask ourselves 'how can I feel happy or relieved when something so sad has happened?'

“

I really missed Dad when he was in rehab. So I started a diary of all the things I wanted to share with him while he was away. When he got out I read it all to him. We both cried – it was really special for both of us.

”



Through all of this it's important to remember that all of these feelings are natural and that it's OK to feel them. It's also important to remember that everyone feels different things at different times and that it's usually not that helpful to compare where you're at with others.

Here are some suggestions and ideas from other young carers about dealing with loss and grief:

KNOW IT'S OK TO FEEL – good, bad or not feel at all. Give yourself permission to feel how you feel and to listen to what your body and mind is telling you. This means that it's also OK to feel happy – to smile or laugh if you want to!

IT'S OK TO CRY WHEN YOU NEED TO. If you don't feel comfortable crying in front of others, lock yourself in your room or go for a walk, a ride or a skate.

TRY NOT TO BOTTLE THINGS UP – get things out in ways that are safe (so that you and others don't get hurt). This could be by writing it down, talking it through or doing something more creative like painting or drawing how you feel.

HAVE FRIENDS AROUND YOU WHO UNDERSTAND – it's OK to ask people for help or to just hang out when you don't want to be alone. Let them know what you need from them – to talk or to just hang out.

CHERISH THE MEMORIES – keep a scrapbook or photo album and record all the good things that you remember, and all the challenges you've overcome. Maybe plant a tree of memory and watch it grow. It's OK to celebrate the positives – and it might be something you choose to do with your relative or another close family member or friend.

CALL A COUNSELLOR OR YOUNG CARERS WORKER through the Commonwealth Carers Resource Centre on 1800 242 636*, Lifeline on 13 1114 or Kids Help Line on 1800 55 1800.



DEALING WITH STRESS

WHAT IS STRESS?

Everyone experiences stress at some time. In fact, sometimes it can be a good thing – like that feeling of excitement you get when:

- Your birthday is coming up and you're expecting a huge party
- That boy or girl you like in your English class enters the room
- You go on a scary ride at a fun park
- You're getting hyped up for a football game or a drama performance.

In these situations, your body is doing exactly the same thing that it does when you're under other stress. Your body pumps up the chemicals that get you ready for dealing with a crisis – your heart begins to race, you start to breathe more quickly, and you prepare yourself to 'fight' or to take 'flight'.

Your body does this so that it can protect you when you most need it – like when crossing a busy road, when you feel threatened by someone or when you know something bad is about to happen. It prepares you to deal with the situation.

All of us can deal with a certain level of stress – in fact it can keep us going – but when there are too many stressful things happening in our lives or when we let it get pent up, stress can have some pretty ugly effects. These might include:

- Feeling angry all the time – and not knowing why
- Feeling depressed or sad and not being able to break it
- Getting sick
- Fighting with friends or family
- Not being able to sleep.

Young carers often have more stressful things in their lives than other children and young people do. Worrying about relatives, trying to keep up with school, always watching out for people's safety and not getting enough sleep are all things that can be incredibly stressful. Because all these things can stress us out, it's important we know how to deal with them and keep them from taking control of our lives.

HOW CAN I DEAL WITH STRESS?

The best way of dealing with stress is by getting in early and preparing yourself for it. The more you prepare yourself – your body and your mind – the less likely that things are going to stress you out.

AVOID STRESSFUL SITUATIONS

– wherever possible try to stay away from places, people and situations that you find stressful because chances are if they stressed you out last time then they'll stress you out again.

RELAX – take some time out every day for yourself. You might go for a walk, a bike ride, or just sit in your room and listen to music. This time has to be uninterrupted and just for you. It shouldn't be spent on the computer (playing games or chatting) or watching TV.

EXERCISE – your body responds better to stressful situations when it's in-tune. Take some time out every day to skate, surf, run, jog, dance, do some weights or swim. If you can, why not join a sporting team, a dance class or organise to go for



“
I get stressed when my Pop goes missing
”

a jog with a friend – exercise is always more fun if you do it with someone else.

EAT GOOD FOOD – like fruit and vegies. Make sure you have three meals a day and healthy snacks in between. Have a treat every once in a while like some chocolate or cake if it makes you feel better.

AVOID QUICK-FIXES – like caffeine drinks, alcohol or other drugs. They place more stress on your body and mind.

GET SOME SLEEP – catching enough z’s every night is essential if you’re going to be able to cope with stress. Be strict on yourself – don’t sleep in too long or stay up too late because your body then has to work hard to keep alert.

LAUGH – giggling, chuckling, and smiling help cleanse your body and your mind and are the best ways of combating stress. Make sure you watch hilarious movies, tell jokes with your friends and laugh at yourself every once in a while.

TALK TO SOMEONE – chatting to a friend or relative can be one of the most relaxing and stress-busting activities because nothing beats feeling understood, heard and supported by someone who cares.



TRIED AND TRUE STRESS BUSTERS:

Play some music

Do something embarrassing like cluck like a chicken or pretend you’re a ninja

Have a hot shower or bath

Go for a run

Kick a footy

Go to the top of a hill and scream your lungs out

Make some gingerbread men and when they’re cooked bite off their heads

Write down the thing that’s stressing you and stick it to the bottom of your shoe

Call a friend

Go for a swim and float in the pool

Hug a tree

Play a practical joke on someone

Have a hot drink

Blow up a balloon until it pops

Do some push-ups or star jumps.

A REMINDER ABOUT THINGS THAT AREN'T THAT USEFUL:

Taking out your stress on others

Saying things when you’re fired up – you might say something you don’t mean or something you’ll later regret

Taking drugs or alcohol – they might be a quick-fix but the consequences can be long-term

Keep doing the things that stress you

Letting things fester

Having too many cola or caffeine drinks – they’ll catch up on you!

Hurting yourself.

“

Make sure you talk to someone about it. Yeah, you might feel guilty, but you're human and you need to get it off your chest.

”



RELATIONSHIPS

Over time all friendships and other relationships will change – you'll meet new people, have fights, break up, get back together, get to know each other better, share stories and secrets, rely on each other and on it goes.

Sometimes young carers say that the relationships that they have with people around them can change because of their caring. These include relationships with:

FRIENDS

Some young carers say that it is hard to make and keep friends because they're always at home caring for their relative and that it's hard to get out to spend time with other children and young people.

Other young carers say that it's hard to invite people home – because they're worried about how people might react or because they don't want their families to feel embarrassed or uncomfortable.

Making and keeping friends can sometimes be hard but here are some tips from other young carers on how you might try:

- Be proud of who you are and what you do. Keep your head high. People will want to be friends with you if they know you believe in yourself
- Get some help for your family so you can get out. This can usually be organised through the Commonwealth Carer Respite Centre on 1800 059 059*
- Try to find other people in the same situation as you – because they'll understand what you're going through. Camps, support groups and catch up days are a great place to meet other young carers.

OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS

Many young carers tell us that they have really close families because everyone looks out for each other and respects what the others are doing.

Some young carers, though, tell us that caring for other family members can put a lot of strain on relationships. With a lot of stress, frustration and sometimes anger in families, members can take things out on each other even if they don't mean to.

In these situations, young carers suggest:

- Don't take things personally – realise that often people get into fights because they're just not coping
- Try to get help for your whole family – there are services that can help with respite, with help around the home and to get people to deal with some of the hard feelings that surround the home
- Talk, Talk, Talk – try to share your feelings with other people in your family. Sometimes you can get help from social workers or family mediators who can help you communicate with each other more.

Just having enough time can be a big issue for some young carers. Trying to juggle caring for a relative, cleaning up around the house and keeping on top of homework can eat up every spare moment.

THE RELATIVE YOU CARE FOR

Again, many young carers tell us that they feel a range of emotions about their relative and the care that they take on including:

LOVE AND CARE – for someone that means the world to them.

FEAR AND ANXIETY – about what's going to happen to them.

HAPPINESS AND GLADNESS – when things are going well or when things improve.

RESENTMENT – that caring can take a whole chunk of time and energy.

ANGER AND FRUSTRATION – when things don't work out the way that you had expected.

GUILT AND SHAME – when you feel things that you don't think you should be feeling or when you take time out when you think you should be caring.

OVERWHELMED – when you feel like there's too much to do or too much to have to cope with.

HOPE – when you can see that things are getting better.

Because it's really hard to talk about these feelings with their relative, sometimes young carers take it out on them by being grouchy, by getting into fights or by just hiding away.

Often young carers can feel guilty about some of these feelings and try to hide them from their relatives because they don't want to make their situation worse. It's really hard!

Here are a few things that other young carers recommend in these situations:

- Write down how you're feeling and try to talk it through with your relative when you're not feeling as emotional
- Talk to someone you trust about what's going on. Often this could be other family members who are helping you care – they might be experiencing the same thing as you but don't know how to talk about it either
- Let your relative know about the good feelings you have and what they mean to you
- Make a feelings box and fill it with notes on how you're feeling or symbols that remind you about the good and bad days. When you're feeling brave, talk them through with your relative, other family members or people you trust
- Get advice from your local Commonwealth Carer Resource Centre on 1800 242 636*.

I USED TO TRY TO DO EVERYTHING BY MYSELF AND THOUGH I DIDN'T CHOOSE TO CUT MYSELF OFF FROM THE REST OF THE WORLD, OVER TIME I DID.

I DIDN'T WANT TO STRESS MUM OUT BY HAVING FRIENDS AROUND SO I STOPPED INVITING THEM HOME. IT GOT PRETTY LONELY UNTIL I MET A GIRL NEXT DOOR WHO WAS IN THE SAME BOAT AS ME. IT WAS GREAT TO HAVE SOMEONE WHO UNDERSTOOD WHAT WAS GOING ON.





TAKING TIME OUT

All of us need time out sometimes. Caring for a relative can be tiring and taking breaks can help you deal with the stress that you might sometimes feel. Having time out can also be a good thing for the person you're caring for – they can try new things, have something to look forward to and a chance to have some space for themselves.

These breaks are usually called 'respite' and they might be provided to you by another family member or a friend, or by a service that might organise or pay for it.



Young carers tell us that they most need time out when:

- Their relatives are more sick than usual
- When they've got loads of work to do for school or uni
- When there's no-one else around to help
- When they feel sick or run-down themselves

OR

- When they're just not coping and need some time out.

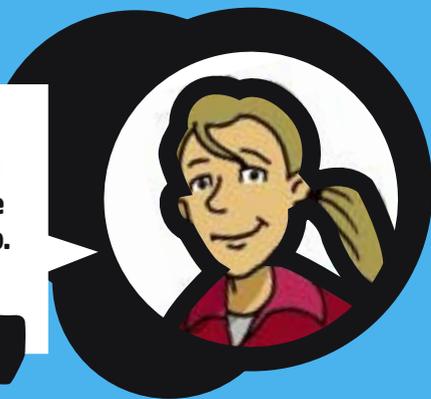
As the times when you need a break are different so are the ways you might take time out. It will depend on what suits you, your relative, the rest of your family as well as the supports that are available in your local area.

Breaks you take might be in your home or away from it. They might be for a few hours, a day or two or even longer. Time out might also be used to help you go to school, to sports or away on a camp or holiday with your friends.

Taking a break doesn't mean that you are weak or that you can't handle things – it just means that you are looking after yourself. It also doesn't mean that you are giving up on your relative – you can check to make sure that they are getting the best support possible.



Twice a year Kerry goes on a camp with other kids with cancer. When she's away I visit friends and catch up with some of the other mums from the cancer support group. It's good to talk with other people who understand.



→ WHAT TYPE OF 'RESPIRE' CAN I GET?

Depending on what services are around in your area, there are different types of respite on offer including:

- Someone coming into your home and caring for your relative so you can have time out (in-home support)
- Someone coming into your home to help with the cleaning and cooking to take the pressure off a little (in-home personal care)
- Having your relative go to a day care program where workers can look after them while you're at school or work (day programs)
- Having a family holiday paid for (family-focused respite)
- Holiday camps for young carers.

These are just some of the types of respite that may be available to you and your family. If you've got other ideas on how you might take a break – then test them out because they might be possible!

WHAT IF I NEED HELP ORGANISING A BREAK?

Across the country a range of services are available to help you and your family get a break. Sometimes finding the right support can be difficult but there are workers who can help you and your family to organise something that meets your needs.

Your local Commonwealth Carer Respite Centre can let you know what services are available and how you might access them. They can be contacted on 1800 059 059*.

In each state and territory, your Carers Association also runs different programs for young carers which might include:

- Support groups where you can meet other young carers like yourself
- Camps, day activities and other fun activities
- Tutoring and help with school or university
- Information days
- Counselling and personal support.

To find out what's available near you, call your local Commonwealth Carer Resource Centre on 1800 242 636*.



ONCE A MONTH
MY POP GOES AND
SPENDS TIME AT A NURSING
HOME WHERE HE'S LOOKED AFTER
24-7. ME AND MY NAN GO AND VISIT
MY COUSINS, NAN GOES SHOPPING
AND I GO TO THE POOL. IT'S
COOL COS WE DON'T HAVE
TO WORRY ABOUT HIM.

WHAT ABOUT WHEN I NEED AN EMERGENCY BREAK?

Though most respite is organised in advance, sometimes young carers might come across a situation where they need help – right here and right now.

This might be because their relative has had an accident or is really unwell and needs to go into hospital. These kinds of situations are difficult enough to handle, so it's important to know that you and your relative are going to be OK.

The best way of doing this is to be prepared – and the best way of being prepared is to develop a plan that covers what should happen if you find yourself in an emergency situation. The following questions might help you begin planning. A more detailed questionnaire is available on the young carers website www.youngcarers.net.au

- What phone numbers do I need in case of an emergency (for example ambulance, police, doctor, mental health crisis team etc)
- Who in my family should I call to let them know what's going on? What are their numbers?
- If left alone, who can I get to come and support me? Help with transport? Tell me what's going on?
- If left alone, where can I stay? How can I get there? Have I checked that this is OK?
- Who can I talk to if I am stressed, afraid, worried about what's going on? How can I get in contact with them quickly?

Your local Commonwealth Carer Respite Centre is also available to help you in these situations. You can call them on 1800 059 059* 24 hours a day.

FOR A WHILE I STOPPED GOING TO SCHOOL BECAUSE I COULDN'T COPE WITH THE BULLYING. THEN I MET THIS GUY JAY ON A YOUNG CARERS TRIP WHO'S IN YEAR TEN AT MY SCHOOL. I TOLD HIM WHAT WAS GOING ON AND SO HE WATCHES OUT FOR ME. NOW THE BULLIES DON'T EVEN COME CLOSE!





COPING WITH SCHOOL

Many young carers say that school is a really important place for them – somewhere they can have time out from their caring, to spend time with other children and young people, and to get some support and information.

However, many young carers also tell us that because of bullying, teachers who don't understand and heavy workloads, school can sometimes be stressful too. Here are some tips on how to work your way through school while still caring.

GETTING SUPPORT

At school there are lots of people who you can talk to if you're not coping with schoolwork or if anything else is bothering you. Talking to your classroom or homeroom teacher is probably a good place to start.

Some young carers have said that it's useful to:

- Tell them about your caring if you feel safe about doing so. Teachers are often keen to help out but can only do so if they know what's going on. Write down the young carers website address and ask them to check out the teachers section for ideas on how they can best support you (www.youngcarers.net.au)
- Come up with a plan with your teacher about how you're going to deal with homework and assignments. Sometimes your teachers might be able to let you off some work, or help

you organise things so that everything doesn't pile up at once. In your plan, talk about what you might need to do if your relative is really unwell and what support you might get from the school

- Talk with the school's youth worker or counsellor – they usually know how to get the most out of the school and how to deal with tough stuff. These workers can also be an advocate for you – that means that they can talk to other teachers and staff if you don't feel comfortable in doing so. Often they can also link you up with the community
- Talk to a librarian – who can help you track down information about illnesses, disabilities, mental illnesses and alcohol and other drugs.

A WORD ON BULLYING

Bullying is never OK. Many young carers tell us that bullying can really hurt and that you shouldn't have to put up with it.

Here's some advice they have on how to deal with bullies and bullying:

- Tell someone about it – this could be a teacher, a counsellor, a youth worker or your parents. Talking to someone else isn't a weak thing to do: usually it takes a lot of courage and strength
- Hang around with other people – you're less likely to be bullied in a group and friends can help you deal with any bullies if they need to
- Be confident – you are an awesome person with great skills, talents and personality. Don't let yourself believe otherwise. Bullies will often attack people who seem to be easy targets – so stand up for yourself and be proud
- Get more ideas from your local young carers worker through the Commonwealth Carer Resource Centre on 1800 242 636*.



“ Because my brother can't talk, he takes it out on me when he gets angry or has a headache. Sometimes he bites me or kicks me and it's scary. I have a lock on my bedroom door so I can go there if no-one is around to help me. ”

CARING SAFELY

Safety is important to keep in mind when caring – both for you and for the relative you're caring for. Take some time every week (or more often if you can) to check to make sure that everything's safe.

“

It's not OK for you to get hurt. If you are, you need to talk to someone about it right away.

”

HOW DO I MAKE MY HOME SAFE?

There are often hazards around the home that need to be taken care of to make sure you and your relative are safe.

Here are some things to check on:

- Make sure that all powerpoints are switched off or covered
- Make sure that all cleaning products and medicines are in a secure place
- Write a list of useful numbers and keep it on the fridge. Include the number for the Poisons Information Line on 13 1126 and the Emergency Services Line on 000
- Make sure that you've got smoke alarms around the home and that they're checked at least once a month
- Make sure that there are at least two ways out of the house if there's a fire and that they are easy to get through – this is especially important if the person you are caring for finds it hard to move or has difficulty seeing
- Clean up around the home, making sure there's nothing your relative can slip on or run into and hurt themselves.

Your local Commonwealth Carer Resource Centre on 1800 242 636* or Commonwealth Carelink Centre on 1800 052 222* may be able to organise someone to come around and check out your home for any hazards. They can also give you some tips on how to make your house safer and how to deal with emergency situations.

HOW DO I HELP GET MY RELATIVE AROUND THE HOUSE SAFELY?

If the relative you care for needs help moving around it's useful to:

- Get a professional, like a physiotherapist or occupational therapist to assess how safe your home is and put in ramps and rails when needed
- Remove any loose rugs and rearrange furniture so that your relative doesn't have an accident
- Get some ideas from any workers coming into the home as to how to best care for your relative.

If the relative you care for needs to be lifted:

- Don't attempt to do it by yourself
- Talk to a worker about whether you can get a hoist or other equipment to help move your relative
- Get advice from a community nurse, occupational therapist, physiotherapist or health worker on how you might lift safely.

SOMETIMES POP DOESN'T REMEMBER WHO I AM SO I CARRY A PHOTO OF NAN AND POP AND ME FROM THIS TIME WE WENT ON A PICNIC. I SHOW IT TO HIM TO REMIND HIM WHO I AM.

HOW DO I CARE SAFELY FOR SOMEONE WHO CAN BE AGGRESSIVE?

If you care for someone who is aggressive, it's important to make sure that you are safe. You can do this by:

- Letting other relatives and health professionals know that your relative gets aggressive sometimes and ask how they might help you
- Make sure that you are never alone with your relative if you feel that you can't deal with the situation
- Plan safe places around the home where you can go if you need space from your relative – this might include a locked bathroom or leaving the house
- Secure or hide anything that may be dangerous to your relative or things that your relative might use unsafely
- Learn some techniques on how to protect yourself in unsafe situations.





“

I was always scared about something happening to my Pop when Nan wasn't around. Nan told me the best way to deal with an emergency is to be prepared – so we came up with some ideas and now I don't get as worried.

”

HOW DO I CARE SAFELY FOR SOMEONE WHO IS CONFUSED OR WHO HAS MEMORY LOSS?

Sometimes the person you look after might get confused or afraid because they don't know what's happening.

In these situations, other young carers suggest that you might:

- Make a schedule of things that are going to happen, let your relative know and try to stick to it
- Leave notes around the home to remind your relative of things that are going on
- Prepare your relative by telling them what's going on in advance – don't just spring things on them
- Make sure that your relative has some ID and your phone number in their wallet or purse so that if they get lost someone can call you
- If your relative is agitated ask them to tell you 3 colours they can see in the room and then what they last ate. This can help them reconnect with where they are and what is going on around them.

DEALING WITH EMERGENCIES

Though your brain and your body might tell you otherwise, during an emergency the most important thing is to stay calm. Take a few breaths and allow yourself some time to think through what's going on.

Before doing anything else you should:

CHECK FOR DANGER – make sure that you are safe and that you're not going to put yourself at risk by helping

CHECK FOR A RESPONSE from the person / people in the emergency

DO THEY RESPOND in any way when you say their name / squeezing their earlobe or shoulders?

ARE THEY BREATHING? If they are not breathing and you know how to do mouth-to-mouth resuscitation begin immediately. If you don't – get help and call an ambulance straight away.

CALLING AN AMBULANCE

– PHONE 000

When you call the ambulance you need to tell them:

- That you need an ambulance
- Where the emergency is taking place (including your state, location, nearby landmarks like a shop name, a building or park)
- Your name
- Your telephone number (or the number you're calling from)
- What happened
- How many people need help
- What help has been given to them
- Who else is around to help you.

Don't hang up until the emergency services operator does.

IF SOMEONE HAS SELF-HARMED

If someone has hurt themselves and it wasn't an accident you need to get medical help straight away. If the person doesn't want help or is being violent then you should call the police on 000.

If they are calm and are bleeding, wrap a towel around their wound and get them to hold on to it tightly.

If the person is happy to go to hospital it's best if you call an ambulance. They will take the person to the hospital where they will be given help – a doctor will look at any injuries and a psychiatrist will



“

I got my First Aid certificate, so now I know what to do.

”

probably check to make sure that their mental health is OK too.

If you are worried that someone is going to hurt themselves you should call Lifeline on 13 1114 or Kids Help Line on 1800 55 1800 for some ideas on what you can do and how you can get help.

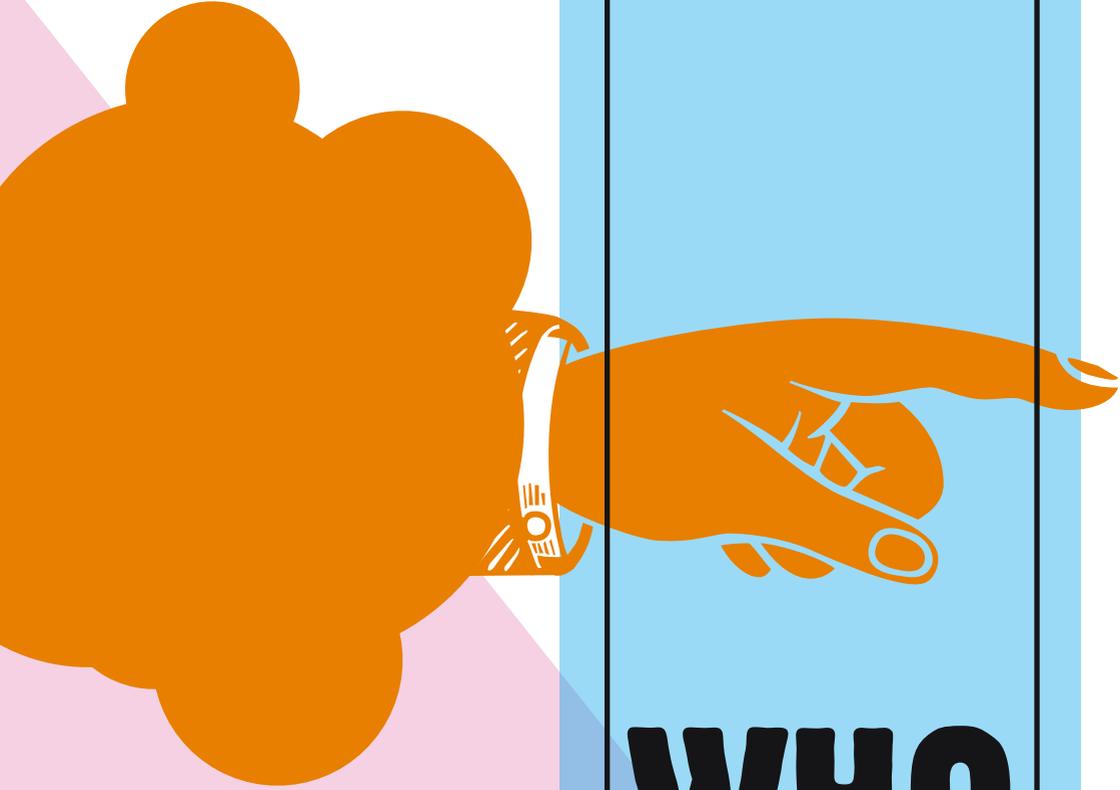
Keep emergency numbers by your phone so that you don't have to remember them in the middle of a crisis.

IF SOMEONE HAS OVERDOSED ON DRUGS

If someone has taken a lot of drugs and you are worried that they have overdosed, call an ambulance straight away. You can find out more about the drugs your relative or friend has taken by calling Poisons Information on 13 1126.

SOMETIMES WHEN MY DAD WAS DRINKING I DIDN'T KNOW IF HE WAS CONSCIOUS OR NOT. I CALLED THE AMBULANCE AND THEY CAME AND CHECKED ON DAD. THEY TOLD ME THAT IF I HADN'T CALLED ANYTHING COULD'VE HAPPENED.





**WHO
CAN YOU
TURN TO?**

SUPPORT FROM YOUR DOCTOR

When you're a young carer, having a good relationship with your GP is really important. GPs can give you information about your relative's condition, answer any questions you might have about how to best care for them as well as checking to make sure that you're healthy too.

To get the most out of your trips to the GP you should:

- Tell the GP that you are a young carer, who you care for and what type of illness, disability, mental health issue or alcohol or other drug problem that they have
- Take a list of questions with you so you don't forget anything
- Take notes
- Ask your doctor for any handouts they might have
- Organise another time to meet with them later down the track.
- Make sure you talk about your own health too.

QUESTIONS YOU MIGHT LIKE TO ASK

- How does my relative's condition affect their body / mind?
- Can I catch it (is it contagious)?
- How are they being looked after – what is their treatment plan?
- How can I best help them?
- Are they taking any medication? What does it do? What happens if they don't take it?
- What do I need to do in an emergency?
- Is it going to get better, worse or stay the same? How can I tell?
- Is it likely that I will suffer from the same condition later (is it hereditary?)
- Do you have any more information or do you know where I can get it (on the internet, fact sheets, organisations)?

Though your doctor might not be able to answer specific questions about your relative without their permission, they can give you a good idea of what is going on and how to help.

COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRES

Sometimes it might be hard to get an appointment with your local GP or you might not be able to afford it. In these situations, it's good to find out if there is a community health centre or youth health service in your area where you can see a doctor or nurse for free. Usually these centres can also give you more time and may be more used to talking to children and young people. Your local Commonwealth Carer Resource Centre should be able to give you an idea of where to go – call them on 1800 242 636*.

YOUR RIGHTS

When getting support from any doctor you have rights which the doctor has to respect. These include the right to:

- Be treated with respect
- Not have your situation shared with others without your permission (except if the doctor is worried about your safety)
- Be given information in words you understand
- Have important information written down
- Change your mind
- Get another opinion
- Have another family member or friend with you during an appointment.

If you are under 16, a doctor might need to get permission from your parents before treating you. You have the right to expect that your doctor will talk to you about this before they talk to your parents.

MEDICARE

To be able to go to the doctor by yourself you need to have a Medicare card. If you are under 15, you are probably listed on a parent or guardian's card – which you'll need to take along to an appointment.

If you are over 15, you can get a Medicare card of your own by:

- Taking some identification (a birth certificate, passport, keycard or bank account details) to a local Medicare office which can be found in the white pages
- Complete a Medicare form – which can be downloaded from the Health Insurance Commission's website (www.medicare.gov.au) or filled out when you arrive at the Medicare office.

Having your own Medicare card can be more convenient and makes you more independent.

MEDICARE COVERS THE COSTS OF:

- All public hospital clinics
- Treatment as a public patient in a public hospital
- All or part of the costs of doctors – often including specialists, optometrists and other health services (check first!).

HELP FROM YOUR PHARMACIST

- Pharmacies are often a great place for you to go to get information about your relatives' condition. Unlike doctor's surgeries, you can usually just pop in and talk to a pharmacist or one of their assistants.
- Pharmacists can help you with a whole range of things, but in particular they can give you information about the medication that your relative is taking, what it does, how often they should take it and what happens if they miss a dose.

Some of the questions that you might ask a pharmacist include:

- What is this medicine used for?
- How and when is the best way for it to be taken?
- Are there any side effects, like feeling sick or sleepy?
- What happens if your relative misses a dose?
- Are there any other drugs that your relative shouldn't take at the same time as taking this one?
- Do you have any information I can take away with me about this medicine?

You will need to take a list of medicines that your relative is taking with you including:

- Their names
- Their strength (usually medicines have a number after their name ie Keflex 750).

If you need information about a particular medicine quickly or in an emergency you can call the Poisons Information Line on 13 1126.

“

My Mum and brother have at least four different medicines each and sometimes I get stressed about mixing them up. My pharmacist helped out by putting them into a 'booster pack' so I know when to give them out and how often.

”



INFO AND SUPPORT

SUPPORT GROUPS

As well as giving you a chance to get things off your chest, support groups can be good to get information about your relative or friend's condition, how to best care for them and how to get help for yourself. Many organisations that support people with different conditions run groups for family members and friends – why not ring and see if they've got a group you could go to.

ON-LINE CHAT GROUPS

Many young carers say that they like to hang out in on-line chat groups. Usually these places are a great place to chill out and meet other children and young people – but it's always important to make sure that you're safe.

Here's some tips from other young people on how to surf the net safely:

- Don't ever give out your real last name, phone number or address to people over the internet – you can't be sure who they are
- Check out any information people might give you before acting on it – you don't want to get yourself in any trouble
- Don't arrange to meet anyone you meet on the net without talking it through with a parent or a trusted adult
- You don't have to put up with any abusive comments or other stuff that makes you feel uncomfortable – log off immediately and tell someone about it.

Some young carers are setting up their own young carer chat groups – call your local young carer worker through the Commonwealth Carer Resource Centre on 1800 242 636* to find out if they know of one.

THE INTERNET

The internet is a great place to get good, up-to-date information. Unfortunately, though, for every good website there is probably another one that has wrong or unhelpful information. It's important, then, that you learn how to work out how to distinguish between the two.

Here's a few good sites that might point you to the information you need:

- **www.youngcarers.net.au** is the new Carers Australia website designed for young carers. Check out the information on-line and the growing list of links – there's always something new to find!
- **Carers Australia** also has it's own website at www.carersaustralia.com.au You'll be able to find useful fact sheets and links to the Carers Association in your capital city
- **Reachout!** is a website for young people and covers a whole range of topics that they might come across – there's even a section on young carers! Go to www.reachout.com.au
- **KidsHealth** – is a site for children, teens and young adults. It has some great information about a whole range of illnesses, disabilities, mental health problems and services. Check it out at www.kidshealth.org
- **It's All Right** – was put together by SANE and can give you some information and links about mental illness. It's pretty funky and easy to read: www.itsallright.org
- **Kids Help Line** has a website at www.kidshelpline.org.au and has some information about bullying, dealing with stress and talking things through
- **www.thesource.gov.au** is the Commonwealth Government's youth website. It's got links to websites in each state and territory that can let you know what's going on and how to get help.

WHO CAN HELP YOUR RELATIVE?

Across the country there are a whole range of services and supports available for people with an illness, disability, mental illness or drug or alcohol problem. Though it varies from area to area, here are some of the types of services that might be able to help your relative out:

HOME HELP can be available where a worker comes into your home to help you and your relative out. They can usually help out with things like shopping, cleaning and washing or helping your relative with things like showering, toileting or changing dressings.

HOME NURSING is often available where a trained nurse can visit people in their homes. They may provide assistance with showering and dressing, giving medications and injections or changing dressings. Care can be provided regularly or occasionally when you need it.

FOOD SERVICES can often be organised for people who find it hard to make their own meals. These services can drop around food (either fresh or frozen) during the day.

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS (OT) can sometimes help your relative do things at home like getting in and out of bed, taking a shower or getting some exercise and may also help organise equipment to make caring easier – like lifts or hoists.

TRANSPORT can sometimes be organised to help people who don't have access to regular transport. This might be to appointments, to shopping or social activities. Sometimes your local hospital or health centre can help out with transport too.

COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRES can often provide affordable (if not free) services including counselling, physio, and advice on health, relationships and feelings.

PALLIATIVE CARE is for people who have a terminal illness and their carers and it helps to relieve pain, reduce stress and help them deal with some of the issues around death and dying. Your local hospital or community nurse should be able to get you in contact with a palliative care program.



HOW CAN MY RELATIVE GET THESE SUPPORTS?

- Commonwealth Carer Resource Centres often have a list of services available in your local area. Call them on 1800 242 636* for more information
- Your local doctor is often aware of what supports and services your relative might be able to receive. They can sometimes make a referral for you
- Nurses, carers and other health workers who come into your home or provide help elsewhere often have a good idea of what other support is available
- Specialist services and programs like the Cancer Council, the MS Society, Schizophrenia Fellowship etc often have information about programs for people with specific conditions. Look them up in the 'Community Help' section of your local phone book for contact details
- 'Just look' is a website where you can find out what supports are available in your local area. You can find it on-line at www.justlook.org.au

WHO CAN HELP YOUR FAMILY?

Sometimes families can benefit from supports as a group. In most towns and cities there are family centres or family workers who can help you access a range of supports including:

FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES are often able to support families by looking at what help they might need and connecting them up with programs that give them support.

MEDIATION – Family mediation can help families talk and deal with any problems they might be having.

RESPIRE – Commonwealth Carer Respite Centres may be able to help organise a break for your whole family. This might give you time to relax without the pressures of every day life.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT is often available through charities, community centres and social workers. This Emergency Relief Funding can help families pay bills, buy food and clothes and cover other family expenses.

CARERS ASSOCIATIONS – As well as having programs for young carers, each state and territory association can help other family members who are caring too. There are support groups, information services, social outings and classes on how to care safely.

A WORD ON CHILD PROTECTION



Sometimes families are worried about seeking support because they are afraid that they might be split up or because they think that people might judge them. Child protection services exist to make sure that children and young people are safe and will usually only intervene if they believe that the child or young person is at risk of harm.

Most of the time, child protection services work with families to come up with ways that the family can be better supported and can help connect them with services that they might need.

HOW CAN MY FAMILY GET THESE SUPPORTS?



- Commonwealth Carer Resource Centres often have information on supports for families. Contact them on 1800 242 636*
- Community Centres exist in most towns and cities. Workers can help link you up with information and supports
- Lifeline can give you contact details of local supports and programs. Contact them on 13 1114
- School counsellors and youth workers can help you find the help you need
- 'Just look' is a website where you can find out what supports are available in your local area. You can find it on-line at www.justlook.org.au

WHO CAN HELP YOU?

All of us need some time out, someone to talk to, and a hand getting things done. Here is a list of services and supports that are usually available to young carers themselves:

YOUNG CARER WORKERS have been employed in every state and territory to help young carers get the support they need. You can call them through the Commonwealth Carer Resource Centre on 1800 242 636*.

SUPPORT GROUPS give young carers a chance to meet others in the same situation as themselves, to talk through any issues they might have with people who understand and to have fun in a safe and positive environment. They might be for all young carers or focus on a specific condition. Sometimes they're run face-to-face but they can also be on the phone or over the internet. Contact your local Commonwealth Carer Resource Centre for ideas about what groups are running.

YOUTH CENTRES – in most towns and cities there is a youth centre, a youth club or sports and recreational facility where young people can hang out, talk to a worker and meet other young people. Youth Centres often have a good idea about what other services and supports are available and can hook you up with people who can help you with your caring.

YOUTH HEALTH CENTRES are like youth centres but they might have doctors, nurses and counsellors to help you with any health issues you have. You can often get a free and confidential appointment with someone who can help you out.

YOUTH REFUGES can sometimes give you a place to stay when you really need it.

COUNSELLORS are often available to help young carers talk through their issues. You can usually find them through the Commonwealth Carer Resource Centre on 1800 242 636* or at school, youth health centres or in the phone book.

HOW CAN I GET THESE SUPPORTS?

- Young carer workers can connect you up with local supports. You can contact them through the Commonwealth Carer Resource Centre on 1800 242 636*
- Youth workers can be found at youth and community centres and sometimes at schools and can connect you up to supports
- Lifeline on 13 1114 and Kids Help Line on 1800 55 1800 are a great place to talk and to find out how to get more support
- 'Just look' is a website where you can find out what supports are available in your local area. You can find it on-line at www.justlook.org.au

HOW DOES THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT HELP YOUNG CARERS?

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Depending on your situation you may be able to access financial assistance in the form of:

CARER ALLOWANCE: an income supplement for people who provide daily care and attention at home to a person who has disabilities or a severe medical condition.

The person you care for must meet certain eligibility criteria for you to receive Carer Allowance. Carers of any age can apply for the payment. Your income does not affect the amount of money paid.

CARER PAYMENT: an income support payment to people who because of their caring role are unable to support themselves through participation in the workforce.

The person you care for must meet certain eligibility criteria for you to receive Carer Payment. Carers of any age can apply. Carers can work, train or study for up to 25 hours per week and still receive payment. Any income you earn may affect the amount of money paid.

YOUTH ALLOWANCE: is available to eligible young people who are studying, seeking employment or preparing for paid employment.

NEWESTART ALLOWANCE: provides income support for people over 21 years of age who are unemployed.

ABSTUDY: Indigenous secondary or tertiary students may be eligible for ABSTUDY.

Other forms of assistance are also available such as Rent Assistance, Pharmaceutical Allowance, Concession Cards

For more information contact your local Centrelink office on 13 2717.

RESPITE

Taking time out from your caring tasks and responsibilities is very important in order for you to stay on top of things, staying healthy and enjoying life.

Respite is available through the Commonwealth Carer Respite Centres if you are under 25 years and are the significant provider of care and support for a parent, partner, child, relative or friend, who has a disability, is frail aged, or who has a severe mental or physical condition, and because of your caring responsibilities you:

- Frequently miss school
- Have little or no time to do your homework
- Find it hard to concentrate at school or hang out with school friends
- Are thinking of leaving school early.

Some of the options available include:

- Up to five hours at home respite per week during the school term to complete secondary education or vocational equivalent education.
- Unused respite may be stored for later use (up to a maximum of 20 hours); and
- 2-week blocks to undertake activities such as study for exams, training or recreation. This respite can be taken in a 2-week block to cover exam periods or one day at a time when you feel stressed about caring and trying to study.

For more information contact the Commonwealth Carer Respite Centre on 1800 059 059*.



YOUTH SUPPORT PROGRAMS

Youth Activities Services and Family Liaison Worker (YAS/FLW) program helps young people 11 to 16 years of age. YAS/FLW Services can:

- Help young people gain access to a range of supervised, structured, and attractive activities, which are matched to their needs, mainly outside school hours
- Provide positive peer support
- Where possible and appropriate, provide individual practical support and guidance to young people and their families
- Advocate on behalf of young people to schools and other organisations where appropriate.

RECONNECT helps young people between the ages of 12 and 18 who are homeless, and those at the risk of homelessness, to become more involved with their family, work, education, training and the community through mediation, counselling and practical support for the whole family.

Reconnect provides confidential support to families to try to help young people to stay at home until they have the necessary skills to become independent.

Reconnect can help young people to:

- Work things out with their family
- Connect with programs that help to find employment

- Stay in school when it gets tough
- Link into training options
- Get income support if eligible
- Find somewhere safe to stay if necessary.

Reconnect works closely with other local services to provide help in a way that is sensitive to your family's needs and those of your community.

Reconnect pamphlets are available in many languages and can be obtained from schools, Centrelink and the Reconnect service in your area.

MENTOR MARKETPLACE is a program that aims to increase the mentoring opportunities available to young people.

Mentoring available under the program improves the outcomes for young people aged 12 to 25, who need assistance to stay connected to family and community, education, training and the workplace.

The funded service providers ensure access to mentoring for a wide range of young people, including those in foster care; young carers; young people with disabilities; Indigenous young people; and those from disadvantaged groups and localities.

Mentor Marketplace forms part of the Australian Government's ongoing response to ensure that young people have the support they need for effective participation in community life.



You can find further information on the Australian Government youth programs that are administered by the Department of Family and Community Services on their web site

<http://www.facs.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/youth/nav.htm>



ASSISTANCE WITH WORK AND STUDY

→ JOB PLACEMENT, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING PROGRAM (JPET)

The JPET program assists students and unemployed young people aged 15–21 years who face multiple personal and social barriers that severely limit their capacity to:

- Participate socially in the life of their communities
- Participate in economic focused activity such as education, employment and vocation training
- Benefit from employment assistance

Young people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless are the primary focus for JPET.

JPET aims to help young people stabilise their situation and then address their personal and social barriers so they can reconnect with school or start looking for work and retraining programs.

More information about JPET can be found at: <http://www.workplace.gov.au/>



NEW APPRENTICESHIP SCHEME

New Apprenticeships combine practical work with structured training to give you a nationally recognised qualification and the experience you need to get the job you want. New Apprenticeships are now available in over 500 occupations in an increasing range of industries.

Information about the scheme can be found at www.newapprenticeships.gov.au or by phoning 1800 639 629.



NEW APPRENTICESHIPS ACCESS PROGRAM

This program provides job seekers who experience barriers to skilled employment with pre-vocational training, support and assistance to obtain and maintain a New Apprenticeship. Alternatively, a job seeker may be supported into employment further education or training.

More information can be found at Centrelink, your Job Network Provider or <http://naap.dest.gov.au/Default.aspx>



JOBS PATHWAY PROGRAM

The Jobs Pathway Program helps at risk young people move through school and from school to further education, training or employment.

Information about the scheme can be found at <http://jpp.detya.gov.au/> or by phoning 1800 635 035.

HOW CAN I FIND THE RIGHT SERVICE FOR ME?

Getting the right service is important and often the best place to start is with your local Commonwealth Carer Resource Centre which you can call on 1800 242 636*. Workers on the other end of the line can help you get information about services and supports that are available. They can also link you up with your local young carers worker.

In many towns and cities there are also Commonwealth Carelink Centres where you can get information about community care and aged care services. To find out where the closest centre is call 1800 052 222*.

You can also get help finding supports for your relative and family from:

- Commonwealth Carer Respite Centres on 1800 059 059*
- Aged Care Information Line on 1800 500 853.

To find help 24 hours a day 7 days a week, try calling:

- Kids Helpline on 1800 55 1800
- Lifeline on 13 1114.



HOW DO I GET STARTED?

Once you've made contact with a service, they'll probably want to come around and do an assessment of your family. This means that they'll talk to you and your family about what it is you need and what kind of help you want.

Sometimes services will only want to talk to adult members of the family – but if you want to be involved you definitely should ask. It's a good idea to talk this through with other family members so they can support you with this.

When the service comes up with ideas about how they are going to help your family make sure that you let them know what you think – because it will definitely impact on your life too.

MAKING COMPLAINTS ABOUT SERVICES

It's not always easy to complain about a worker or a service. You might not like the way that you or your relative are being treated, the types of things that workers do and don't do or how you are involved in making decisions. Many young carers are worried that if they make a complaint then they won't get any help in the future.

WILL MAKING A COMPLAINT MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

Sometimes people won't do anything with your complaint, but often they will. They might change the way that they work with your family, they might involve you more in making decisions or change the kinds of supports they provide.

If a service doesn't know that you're unhappy – they can't do much about it!



HOW CAN I MAKE A COMPLAINT?

There's lots of different ways of making a complaint including:

- Talking directly to the service, raising your issues with a worker face-to-face
- Asking to speak to a senior person in the organisation
- Getting a youth worker, a teacher, a counsellor or someone else you trust to complain for you (or with you)
- Writing down your complaint and sending it in to the service organisation who is running the program.

Most services will have a complaints procedure that can give you ideas about the best ways of making a complaint.

It's often a good idea, no matter what you choose, to talk it through with an adult you trust to get their support and advice.



A stylized illustration featuring a hand with a watch pointing towards the text 'CALL FOR HELP' and a large arrow. The background is composed of various shades of pink, blue, and white, with abstract shapes and patterns.

**CALL FOR
HELP**



EMERGENCY SERVICES

000 for ambulance, fire and police support.

POISONS INFORMATION LINE

13 1126 for information about poisons, medications, drugs and what to do if someone has taken something harmful.

COMMONWEALTH CARER RESOURCE CENTRE

1800 242 636* for information, support, counselling and ideas on what help is around your local area.

COMMONWEALTH CARER RESPITE CENTRE

1800 059 059* for time out, extra support in the home and ideas about how to get breaks when you need them. Emergency support available 24 hours a day.

KIDS HELP LINE

1800 55 1800 for someone to talk to about caring, school, relationships or just life in general. Available 24 hours a day.

LIFELINE

13 1114 for advice, support and ideas on what services can help you. Check out their website www.justask.org for a list of supports in your area.

COMMONWEALTH CARELINK CENTRES

1800 052 222* for information for carers on services and supports, particularly for those caring for people who are aged or with disabilities.

JUST ASK

1800 131 114 for information on mental health issues and supports.

FAMILY DRUG SUPPORT LINE

1300 368 186 for information for families on alcohol, other drugs and services available.

USEFUL WEBSITES

www.youngcarers.net.au

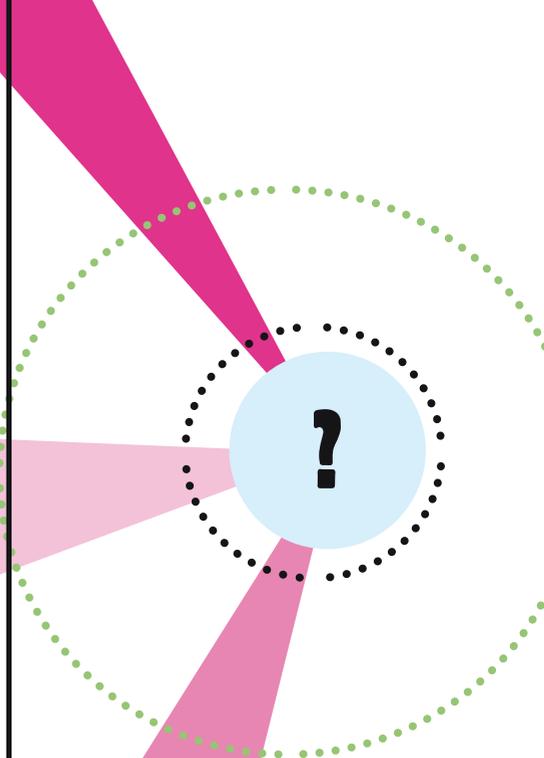
– Carers Australia's site for young carers, their families and people working with them.

www.carersaustralia.com.au

– for information about what Carers Australia does and links to carers associations in each state and territory.

www.reachout.asn.au – a national website for young people on issues that affect their lives.

www.justlook.org.au – to find out what services are in your area.





A Carers Australia project funded by the Australian Government Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.

Information contained in this Booklet is intended as a guide only. The Australian Government Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and Carers Australia cannot be held responsible for any damage or loss arising out of the contents of this Booklet.

Carers Australia would like to acknowledge the contribution made by the Australian Government Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, carers, state and territory Carers Associations, Commonwealth Carer Resource Centres and staff at Carers Australia to the contents of this Booklet. An Australian Government Initiative.