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## **A Family Carers Life - the need self-care**

Some statements I hear carers reflect on:

*"Asking for help is so hard. I'm not sure why..."?*

*"One of the things I battle with is the feeling that no one else would be able to do what I am doing for my daughter".*

*"I am not big-headed. I have developed a proven way to care for my mum and dad and keep them safe. For example, I monitor for scammers – phone calls, mail, financial matters, paying the bill".*

*"I am not sure if others would understand".*

*"It will be so hard to show someone else what needs doing and how I do it".*

*"Would they care for dad correctly? Would they be able to keep him safe"?*

### **Taking care of others can be extremely demanding.**

*"It is exhausting to keep up with everything mum and dad need".*

In the short-term, it may seem like the easiest option is to put effort into providing 'crisis' care. But the crisis reaction then turns into a new norm with increasing demands over extended periods. This approach will not work for long.

### **Asking for assistance**

For longer term caring you will drain your energy reserves more quickly than you expect. The mix of emotions, stress and extra tasks will take a toll on your own health. Your body and mind will send you messages that you need to take better care of yourself.

Others may notice you are looking unwell, drained or becoming more irritable. If you do not heed the symptoms early, they will escalate. Then you could face your own issues – emotional exhaustion, meltdowns, major illness, burnout.

In this state you will be unable to provide constructive support for your loved ones.

*"Eventually I found out that my way was not the only way. When I realised this and had some other people assisting, it made a world of difference".*

Asking for assistance can be difficult and uncomfortable. What type of assistance is there? What assistance do I need? Who can assist?

*“It can feel like more trouble, time and energy than it is worth”.*

Journeys Continue is here to assist carers. We will work with you to identify what you need, who to ask and how to get the right supports for your situation.

### **Take Care of Yourself**

Your loved ones are lucky to have your support. What they need from you will feel like you need to empty your diary and fill up with physical and emotional energy.

Giving completely of yourself can quickly exhaust your reserves. Supporting another person can be overwhelming... completely crushing. Or it can be challenging, yet sustainable.

Taking care of yourself makes a world of difference. Commit to it now. Do not be afraid to get some support and assistance You cannot do it all – all the time.

### **Create a Support System for Yourself**

Commit to becoming your own caregiver too.

A support system is one or more people who will support your needs as you support another.

Support people provide practical assistance and solutions and help keep an eye on your health, safety and well-being. With their support and accountability, you will be better able to protect your well-being and ensure you are taking care of yourself so you can keep going as a primary care-giver for as long as needed.

### **Your support people may include**

- Respite carers – To allow you a chance to have time out to take care of your yourself.
  - Respite provides you with breaks which are crucial for carers’ needs, especially when you are caring full-time or over a prolonged period.
  - Respite may be in the person’s home, at a facility, and help with taking your loved one into the community.
- Your medical or allied health team are there to provide appropriate medical care for you and the person you are caring for
  - Regular medical checks assist to prevent a health crisis.
- Experienced professionals – Accredited social workers are a great resource for both you and the person you are caring for.
  - Accredited social workers assist you accessing resources and supports, provide tips and tricks, and suggest ways to make each day a little easier.

- Accredited social workers assist to navigate through and access the support networks required for both yourself and the person you are caring for.
  - Accredited social workers can assist to plan the journey ahead, provide counselling, assist with processing feelings, and working through the grief and loss of a loved one.
- Good friends – help you get by
  - Good friends may assist with tasks and errands. They will lend an empathetic ear and keep you accountable for your self-care plan.
- A spiritual leader or support person
  - can offer a kind ear, wisdom, and perspective during the tough yet special times.

Feel free to make contact if we can be of assistance to you.