

tion and your physical or mental health is suffering.

- When active caring ends, remember that every Carer differs in the time they can take to adjust to their loss. However, if you are still feeling sad or depressed, or have difficulty in coping after a period of time, contact your general practitioner or public health nurse.

Statutory and voluntary organisations provide helpful listening and advice services. People in similar caring situations may also provide a listening ear. A number of Carers' support groups are in place.

**USEFUL CONTACTS:**

- Carers' Development Unit, SHB*  
COFFA House, 21 Church St,  
Shandon, Cork.  
Tel: 021 4212019, Fax: 021 4212013  
E-mail: [carers@shb.ie](mailto:carers@shb.ie)
- Carers Association (Cork),*  
Tel: 021 4806397
- Carers Association (Kerry),*  
Tel: 066 7121399
- Carers Association (Freefone),*  
Tel: 1800 24 07 24
- West Cork Carers Support Group,*  
(WCCSG) Tel: 027 53848  
Carers Support Line lo-call:  
1890 201 533  
(Wed/Thurs 10-1pm)
- Alzheimer's Society of Ireland,*  
(021) 4391690



# Caring for the carer



**Southern Health Board**  
Bord Sláinte An Deiscirt



© SOUTHERN HEALTH BOARD CARERS' DEVELOPMENT UNIT, COFFA House, 21 Church Street, Shandon, Cork.  
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**A Carer is a person who provides help and support to a relative, friend or partner. Care can be provided part-time or full-time to those who cannot manage without help, due to disability, illness or frailty.**

Carers give a great deal to another person and may receive little in return. It is important to seek help and support when you become a Carer.

## Too much to do?

There are times when you may feel it is impossible to cope and have no one to help you. Managing your time and prioritising what needs to be done can be helpful.

- Make a list of everything you need to do this week
- List them in order of 'priority'
- List the things you need to do daily
- List jobs that need to be done within the week
- Sometimes, having a really big job waiting for your attention can be too

overwhelming to begin. Small stages can make a difficult task more approachable. It may be helpful to break it into 4 or 5 smaller stages

- As you have completed items from the list, cross them off. You will feel good as the list gets shorter.

## Normal feelings experienced with caring can include:

- Sense of satisfaction
- Anger
- Fear
- Hope
- Helplessness
- Disbelief
- Fulfilment
- Acceptance
- Stress
- Guilt

The first thing is to recognise that these feelings are quite normal and need expression. People vary in the way they handle distressing feelings. At the heart of caring is love, fulfilment, anger and satisfaction. Change and loss are some of the effects of caring.

## Tips on Coping:

- Remember you have coped with other life changes
- Seek information regarding what services and supports are available
- Set limits on what you are able to do
- Ask for help from family, friends, neighbours, general practitioner and other professionals
- Keep your friends, they can comfort and support you
- Take time out as this is essential.

- You need time for yourself
- Help yourself, find opportunities to talk about what is happening.

(For further information see leaflet *Coping With Loss* in this pack).

## Coping with stress?

Stress is physical, mental or emotional strain or pressure. It can affect your health, energy levels, ability to cope and your quality of life.

### SYMPTOMS OF STRESS

Stress can cause physical, emotional and behavioural problems.

#### Physical Symptoms

- Trembling
- Muscle tension
- Discomfort in neck, shoulders & back
- Sweating
- Tiredness
- Nightmares
- Difficulty in swallowing
- Upset stomach.

#### Emotional Symptoms

- Anxiety (a feeling of uneasiness or dread)
- Tearfulness
- Mood swings
- Feeling down or depressed
- Anger
- Guilt.

#### Behavioural Changes

- Lack of interest

- Poor concentration
- Change in eating habits – either eating more or less
- Increased alcohol intake
- Smoking.

### STRESS MANAGEMENT

As a Carer, you need to look after your own health. If you are experiencing stress in your life there are a number of ways in which you can help yourself to reduce the symptoms such as:

- Take exercise every day. Take a brisk walk, or exercise with a video or television programme, to get rid of stress
- Spend time outdoors
- Listen to or watch programmes that make you smile and laugh. Laughing is good for you
- Eat healthy foods
- Enjoy relaxing and happy music.
- Meditation and relaxation tapes are helpful activities
- Relax, find time to read, solve cross-words puzzles, or enjoy another pastime each day
- Aromatherapy, massage, reflexology and facials may also be of benefit
- Support Groups can also be beneficial
- Try not to bottle things up
- Talk to a trusted friend or relative.

## When to seek help?

- When you feel you cannot cope with the demands of your caring situa-