

TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

When you are a carer it is often the case that the most important thing in your life is the person you love and care for. Often this can stop you from paying attention to your own needs and health.

HELPFUL TIPS

- See your GP about yourself, not just the person you care for (write out a list beforehand of what you want to say and ask!)
- Tell your GP that you are a Carer and what your caring role involves
- Try to keep your social contacts so that you do not become isolated
- Take regular breaks and time out from your caring responsibilities, even if it is just for a few minutes a day
- Plan ahead, don't wait for a crisis to get help
- Remember you both need somebody else to talk to
- Find out if there are any support groups you can join (Signpost can let you know what is available)

STRESS

A caring relationship is an intense and intimate one, and the feelings that arise can be very powerful. The fear of being unable to cope, a sense of guilt, and resentment on either side can lead to stress. Stress can have many effects, such as headaches, backaches, tiredness, skin problems or stomach problems. The psychological effects can lead to bad temper, depression, anxiety and tension.

There are ways to deal with the effects of stress:

- Ensure you have some regular time to relax - put some time aside for yourself every day
- Do something you enjoy - meet friends, have your hair done etc
- Rest your mind as well as your eyes
- Try to sleep at least 7-8 hours each night
- Don't depend on drugs and / or alcohol
- Try to take some regular exercise, even if it just a short walk in the fresh air
- Try and eat a balanced diet
- Don't be afraid or too proud to ask for help

MOVING AND HANDLING

If you have to assist someone with moving on a regular basis, you must remember that your own health may be at risk. If you damage your back it can cause long-term problems. Assisting somebody to move, if done properly and in a safe environment, should not cause damage to anybody.

Before helping somebody to move:

- Be clear about what you want them to do i.e. stand up
- Prepare the area and the person who needs help i.e. move obstacles, have walking aids close by and make sure the person is ready to move.
- Use equipment if available

When moving somebody:

- Make sure the person you are helping knows what you are going to do
- Make sure you are in a good position not bending stooping or twisting
- Explain what you intend to do and when (eg. On their count of three)
- Position your feet so that they are completely stable
- Bend at the hips and knees - keep your back straight
- If someone falls, it is important that you do not try to lift them up on your own

It is often the small repetitive movements that can cause problems. Take a step back and look at whether you could reduce the strain on your back for example using a stool to sit on whilst putting on shoes and socks.

Signpost has a Moving & Handling Trainer. Please contact us for more details on 0161 442 0442.

TALK TO SOMEBODY

It is difficult to balance your health and social life to your caring commitments. It is important that if you feel things are too much for you to cope with, that there is somebody to support you. Signpost Stockport offer a free and confidential counselling service where you can talk to somebody who is willing to listen to you on a completely impartial and non-judgemental basis. Phone us on 0161 442 0442 for more details.