

Looking after yourself

Last updated November 2011

It is really important that you, as a carer, take time to look after yourself. We've put together some information and advice to help you.

Take a break

Make time to relax, keep your hobbies going and see friends and family. This will help you to carry on caring and give your best to the person you care for. It can be easy to sacrifice your own interests and needs when you are busy caring but this may make you more prone to illness and feeling low.

- Put aside some time each day for yourself – read the newspaper, listen to some music, or go for a short walk.
- Get out every week or so to meet a friend, have your hair done or pursue an interest. It is important that you do something enjoyable that keeps you in contact with the outside world.

Stay independent

Try and do things **with** and not **for** the person you care for when they are ill. Encourage the person you care for to do all they can for themselves so they stay able and confident.

Accept support from family and friends

It's natural for you to want to provide the highest standard of care to your loved one and it's easy to turn down offers of help. Try and accept help that might be offered by family and friends. This can be a valuable source of support for yourself and the person you care for.

- Try to involve other family members right from the start so that responsibility doesn't all rest with you,
- Always try to accept help from friends and neighbours if they offer it. If you say that you can manage they may not offer again.
- Suggest ways that people can help.

York Carers Centre

 01904 715490

 enquiries@yorkcarerscentre.co.uk

www.yorkcarerscentre.co.uk

City of York Council

 01904 555111

 adult.socialsupport@york.gov.uk

www.york.gov.uk/health/carers

Emotional support

Everyone needs a chance to discuss their feelings. You can get different types of support from:

- Friends and family.
- Understanding professionals.
- Local support groups.
- Online discussion forums.

Keep well

Remember to look after yourself as it is in the interests of both you and the person you care for.

- Don't put off your own appointments at your GP surgery. See your GP regularly. Make sure they know that you are a carer.
- Have a look at the **Carers Self-Health Checklist** to help you think about your own health needs.
- Try to eat a well balanced diet, with at least 5 portions of fruit and vegetables a day.
- Try to take regular exercise. This could be a walk in the fresh air each day or some exercise at home.
- Make sure you get enough sleep. If your sleep is disturbed by the person you care for ask your GP about it.
- If you have to help the person you care for move around make sure you don't damage your back. Ask your GP for advice.

Know your limits

Look after yourself and be realistic about what you can and can't do. This will help you and the person you care for in the long term.

If you want a copy of the **Carers Self Health Checklist** and information about sources of support contact York Carers Centre on **01904 715490**, email enquiries@yorkcarerscentre.co.uk or visit www.yorkcarerscentre.co.uk.

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