

Health matters

Fact sheet 11: **Managing anxiety and depression**

Whilst caring can be a rewarding and affirming experience for many, we also know that carers can be adversely affected by their caring roles. We hope that these brief suggestions might help you to manage anxiety and depression but we strongly **advise that you seek professional advice** if you feel that your caring role is having a significant **adverse effect on your mental health** and wellbeing.

About anxiety and depression

If you are depressed you might feel like nothing can help, but this is untrue. Most people recover from bouts of depression and some even look back on it as a useful experience which caused them to take stock of their lives. Depression presents itself in many different ways and you might not always realise what's going on because sometimes your problems can appear as physical, rather than mental or emotional.

Many people who are depressed often experience anxiety as well; the two problems often occur together and each can make the other worse. We suggest that you:

Seek support and connect with others

- Talking to other people who are in a similar situation can be a great help when you are feeling anxious or depressed. Not everyone finds this easy but it may be a surprise to find that others feel the same way as you.
- If you can, talk to your family and friends as well. Just talking about how you feel and getting it out into the open, can make you feel better.

Break the cycle of negativity

If you are starting to feel depressed it can be easy to get into a cycle of automatic negative thoughts: you get depressed and then get more depressed worrying about being depressed.

- Make a conscious effort to break the hold that the depression has on you
- Try to recognise the pattern of negative thinking and replace it with a more constructive activity. Find something engaging to do.

Keep active and engaged

- Regular exercise can be very effective at raising your mood and increasing your energy levels. Physical activity stimulates chemicals in the brain called endorphins which can help you feel better.
- Our Carer Cafes and exercise programme might help you get a break from caring so you can allow yourself some breathing space. You will also meet other carers who understand and can share their experience with you.

Try to manage your stress levels

If you are feeling tearful, angry or have other symptoms of stress, there are a number of steps you can take to help bring down your stress levels. These include:

- Go out of the room – or right outside if you can – and breathe deeply.
- Get active; physical exercise is a simple way to relieve tension. Even a walk to the shops can help reduce your stress levels.

Most importantly, care for yourself

- Try to pace yourself and tackle one thing at a time
- Be realistic about what you expect of yourself
- Learn to say “no” to other people, some of the time at least.
- Eat well and get plenty of rest.
- Find time to have a break from caring, even if this is just a couple of hours per week.

Carers Trust Hillingdon has a range of services that might help you. For more information please contact us on:

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Email: office@carerstrusthillingdon.org

Website: www.carerstrusthillingdon.org