

SUPPORTING YOUNG CARERS

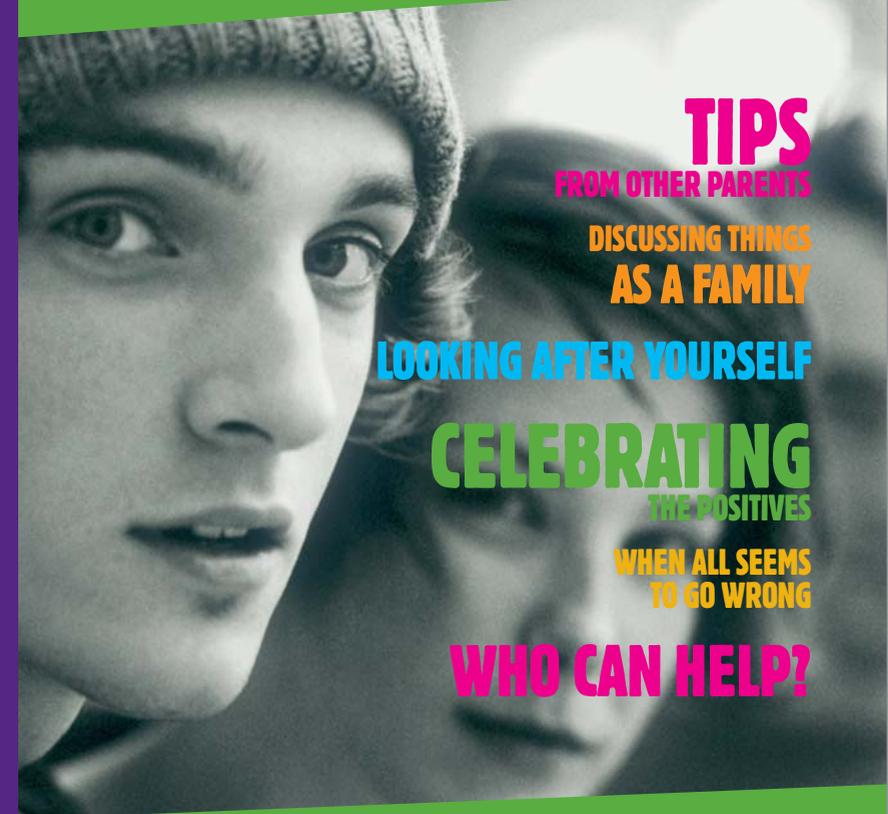


[www.youngcarers.net.au](http://www.youngcarers.net.au)

Z00 224/25



# SUPPORTING FAMILIES SUPPORTING YOUNG CARERS



**TIPS**  
FROM OTHER PARENTS

DISCUSSING THINGS  
AS A FAMILY

LOOKING AFTER YOURSELF

**CELEBRATING**  
THE POSITIVES

WHEN ALL SEEMS  
TO GO WRONG

**WHO CAN HELP?**



Australian Government  
Department of Family and  
Community Services



### **Disclaimer**

Information contained in this Booklet is intended as a guide only. The Australian Government Department of Family and Community Services and Carers Australia cannot be held responsible for any damage or loss arising out of the contents of this Booklet.

### **Acknowledgements**

Carers Australia would like to acknowledge the contribution made by the Australian Government Department of Family and Community Services, carers, state and territory Carers Associations, Commonwealth Carer Resource Centres and staff at Carers Australia to the contents of this Booklet.

### **An Australian Government Initiative**

Additional copies of this Booklet may be obtained from Commonwealth Carer Resource Centres

© Department of Family and Community Services

\*Contact the Commonwealth Carer Resource Centre on 1800 242 636.  
Free call except from mobile phones. Mobile calls are charged at mobile rates.  
An Australian Government Initiative

\*\* Contact the Commonwealth Carer Respite Centre on 1800 059 059.  
Free call except from mobile phones. Mobile calls are charged at mobile rates.  
An Australian Government Initiative

## WHO ARE YOUNG CARERS?

Young carers are children and young people up to 25 years of age who help care in families where someone has an illness, a disability, a mental health issue or who has an alcohol or other drug problem.

The person they help care for might be a parent, a sibling, a grandparent or other relative, or maybe a friend. A young carer might help out with cleaning or cooking, with medications, therapy, medical and other appointments, with keeping the person safe or watching out to make sure that they're feeling OK. At the same time, a young carer may also be caring for their own child, or children.

Across Australia, over 390 000 children and young people help care for their relatives.

### Is your child a young carer?

- Yes – if you are a parent caring for a family member or friend, then chances are one or more of your children is a young carer by helping to provide care and/or taking on additional responsibilities
- Yes – if you are a parent with a disability, an ongoing illness, mental illness, chronic condition, alcohol or drug issue, then chances are one or more of your children is a young carer by providing care and support and taking on additional responsibilities.

In this booklet young carers, irrespective of their age, are referred to as children.



## WHAT'S THIS BOOKLET FOR?

This booklet is for parents. It offers tips and strategies from other parents and young carers to help you understand and support your own children. There is also a website and an information pack designed specifically for young carers [www.youngcarers.net.au](http://www.youngcarers.net.au).

## HOW CARING IMPACTS ON CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Children and young people who help care for a relative or a friend tell us that caring can be a very positive experience. They tell us that they often feel closer to their families, that they develop new skills and experiences and that they feel good about caring for someone they care about.

Sometimes though, when families aren't well supported, children and young people can miss out on opportunities to go to school, do homework, spend time with friends, have a job or further their studies; they can experience high levels of stress and worry; they can feel confused and uninformed. Often they need some help.

This booklet will help you, as a parent, find ways to promote the positives and find ways of keeping children and young people from experiencing some of the negative impacts of care – together.

## LISTENING TO OTHER FAMILIES



### Meet Louise and her daughters Tara and Kirsten

Louise is caring for Tara, her 6 year old daughter who has an intellectual disability, and for Kirsten who is 10. Louise is a single parent who has little support from her family. Kirsten tries to make things easier by doing extra chores at home and by sometimes looking after Tara. Louise relies on Kirsten's help.



### Meet Robyn, Paul and Robert

Robyn and Paul are caring for Paul's frail aged father. Paul's father who has dementia, also recently broke his hip. Robert is in Year 8 and helps by looking after his grandfather two or three times a week while his parents are at work. He also cooks the evening meal four or five times a week in order to help out with the household chores.



### Meet Jacinta and her youngest son Jack

Jacinta has bipolar disorder. Jack, her only child who still lives at home, is 18 years old. Although he recently got a job, it sometimes involves working back late at night; he's worried about how he's going to manage the job and looking after his mum.



### Meet John, Peter, Ben and Sam

John is caring for his partner Peter who has HIV/AIDS. John's children Ben and Sam live with them. 15 year old Ben is not only helping care for Peter but feels that he needs to support his father and 10 year old Sam as well.

## WHAT CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE NEED

When children and young people are encouraged to talk about being young carers they are often very clear about what they need and how they want to be supported. To better understand what young carers say they need, the following comments may be helpful. Parents have also added their own tips.

### To be kept informed

Even quite young children in a family sense when something is different or when something is wrong, even if they don't know what it is. With children of any age, it is always better to talk it over in words they can understand than trying to hide it.

 **Jack:** *Although I do heaps for Mum and make sure that everything is OK at home, her mental health workers often don't discuss her care with me. Maybe they think they're protecting me by not explaining things or keeping me in the loop. By not knowing, though, I worry even more.*

 **Kirsten:** *I used to think that it was something I did when I was little that made Tara like she is. Last week Mum and my auntie were talking about her and they told me that it happened to Tara when she was being born.*

 **Ben:** *Lots of my friends say they'd be really scared of catching AIDS from Peter. I was really worried about it too until Dad finally explained it all to me. He said he didn't know I was worried about it.*

 **Robert:** *I used to be embarrassed about asking my friends over because sometimes my grandfather does things that look weird. One of the aged care workers told me that because parts of his brain are changing he doesn't always know what he is doing. I thought he just did those things to be annoying or to get attention.*

## Tips from parents



**Louise:** *Take time out to talk to your children about the condition of the person you are supporting, including the symptoms, their care plan and whether the condition is hereditary.*



**Jacinta:** *Yes, that's important in my situation too. Jack needed to know about bipolar disorder, the things that can happen to me, how to help me manage, who to contact when I need help and whether it is hereditary.*



**John:** *If it's appropriate, take your child along with you to GP or caseworker appointments if they have questions that you can't answer.*



**Paul:** *Kids don't often want to read information that parents have been given, or that their parents give them. Look for kid friendly information on websites about the condition. I find that if I casually mention it to Robert he'll look them up in his own time.*





**Kirsten:** I get really worried if Mum is late home. Sometimes I worry about what will happen to Tara and me if anything happens to Mum. Who will look after us?

### To feel safe

It is important to take your children's fears and concerns seriously. All children, especially young children, need to feel that they are safe. Although they may not be able verbalise their fears, many young children are worried that the person being cared for may die, that they may also 'catch' the illness or the condition, that their parent doesn't love them, and so on.

It is a good idea to have an Emergency Care Plan in place so that everyone in the family knows what to do and who to contact in case of an emergency. This will help alleviate any fear or confusion they may be experiencing. All children need to have their own Emergency Plan as well. Information about Emergency Care Plans and Emergency Plans has been included later in this booklet.



**Jack:** When I was young I used to worry heaps about the times when Mum was not well. I was scared that I wouldn't be allowed to keep living with her.

### Tips from parents



**Jacinta:** Children and young people need to feel safe and secure. They need to be kept from harmful situations and to be given enough information so that they know what to do in an emergency. It's really hard for my son, and for other young people who are caring for a parent with a mental illness. When things are going well for me I help Jack plan strategies for when things are not so good.



**Paul:** To help our son manage when he's here alone looking after his grandfather, he has a list of contact numbers and knows who to call if anything goes wrong. Each time we are away from home, we call him at least once to see if everything is OK. He also knows that we have our mobile phones turned on and that he can contact us at any time, even at work.

Make plans for your children for the times when the person you support needs emergency care. Talk about these plans with the children so that they know who will take care of them during the time that you may not be available.



## To be seen as care partners



**Robert:** You know, it really gets to me when Mum and Dad talk about my grandfather and what he needs with the care worker without me. Don't they know that I know him really well too? But they don't include me or ask me what I think.

## Tips from parents



**Louise:** In talking with my friends I've realised that kids take on important roles in helping care for their families. So much of what happens when we are caring for someone has an impact on the whole household, so it's a good idea to try and involve kids in discussions and some of the planning.



**John:** We've all changed as a result of caring for Peter. I've come to realise that both my sons need to be involved in the planning that goes into Peter's care.



## To feel that they are not alone



**Ben:** It's not so bad now because I know a couple of other kids who are going through the same stuff. Sometimes we hang out together and just muck around. The youth worker we know asks how things are going and listens when I just need to get it off my chest.



**Sam:** Guess what I've found out? I'm a young carer! Our teacher told us that there are lots of young carers in every school. I know three other kids in our school who are young carers too. We even have a teacher that we can talk to if we can't get our homework done.



**Kirsten:** I got to go on a camp with lots of other kids who are young carers. It was awesome and we did heaps of cool stuff. Sometimes we talked about things like all the stuff we do at home and how we feel about it.

## Tips from other parents



**Louise:** Try contacting the Commonwealth Carer Resource Centre\* to see if there are any young carer programs in your area. When I phoned they were really helpful. My daughter now can go off to camps with other young carers, and has a worker that she can phone if she needs to talk to someone other than me about how she is feeling.



**John:** I made quite a few phone calls because I reckoned that my kids would need a bit of extra support from someone other than myself, especially if things get worse for Peter. I managed to find a local youth worker who was particularly interested in working with kids who are young carers.

## To sometimes take time off from their caring responsibilities



**Kirsten:** My friends used to invite me around for a sleepover but I didn't go because I felt I should help Mum with Tara. When I went to a support group the workers told us that we should still do some of the things that we want to do. I had the best time last weekend. Do you know what I did? I stayed over with 4 of my friends at my friend's house.



**Jack:** Because I'm the only one at home with Mum I feel really responsible for her, especially when she's not well. Mum and I worked out that I need a break, especially when things are not going so well. Now my older sister stays with her if I have to stay back at work or when I go out with my mates.

## Tips from other parents



**Jacinta:** Some of the strategies that Jack and I have planned include backup from my daughter and regular breaks for him, especially when I'm not well and not able to plan them myself. If my daughter can't help out he knows that he can contact our neighbour.



**Paul:** Don't forget that sometimes your child still just needs to be able to be a kid. Because Robert had always been willing to help with caring for his grandfather, I hadn't thought about the fact that he also needed time out to do other things.

## To get support when they need it



**Jack:** You know, I reckon I manage all right – most of the time. I suppose I've just got used to doing what I need to do. What's really helped recently is to know that my sister is on call. Mum's new mental health worker is good because I know I can contact her when Mum's not well.



**Ben:** The best help I get is from the youth worker we know. He told me about these activities for us and the website, and said that I can get a young carer pack that has heaps of cool information.

## Tips from other parents



**Louise:** The things that you might try that were helpful for me include contacting the Commonwealth Carer Resource Centre\* and talking to other people who were in the same situation.



**John:** Not only did I contact the youth worker but I spoke to Sam's school and found that they had a young carer program. If it worked for my kids, it might work for other kids too.



**Jacinta:** Having a mental illness is not easy because, although I have times when things are going OK, I have times when things are not so good. It's taken a long while, but I've realised that just as I need support, so does Jack. Together, we've tried to make sure that he gets the support he needs when I'm struggling the most.

## OTHER THINGS THAT CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE MENTION

Although many children and young people talk about the positive aspects of providing care and support, they also mention issues about which they sometimes feel embarrassed or sensitive. These may include:

- Inappropriate behaviour that is displayed by the person being cared for as a result of the condition, disability or illness
- Their own inability to participate in activities enjoyed by peers. These may include school excursions, sporting events, other leisure activities or just hanging out with friends
- Their inability to juggle competing demands between caring and school, work or study
- The difference that caring creates between peers that don't have any caring responsibilities and themselves
- The sensitive nature of some of the personal care that needs to be provided
- Unpleasant odours that may be associated with incontinence or inadequate personal hygiene
- The stigma that may be attached to particular types of illnesses, conditions and disabilities, including mental health, alcohol and drug abuse
- Their own lack of privacy if they need to share a room with a sibling or the person being cared for

## Tips from parents

- In a way at which they can understand, explain the nature of the illness, condition or disability and the impact that it has on the person
- Contact the school to find out whether they have a young carers policy. Schools across Australia have been encouraged to identify children and young people who may be caring and to provide appropriate support within the school environment
- Try to put time aside to spend just with your child
- Try and stick to a routine involving the children with regard to meals, mealtimes, bedtimes and activities
- Encourage friendships with other children. Where possible, include the child's friends in regular family activities
- A number of state and territory Carers Associations run young carer programs. Contact your Commonwealth Carer Resource Centre\* for information
- If possible, arrange for your child to have regular breaks away from caring. If your child is caring for and supporting you, you might like to talk with them about how they might take a break even though that means asking someone else to help provide your care for a while.

## FEELINGS AND RELATIONSHIPS

The one thing that is constant about all relationships is that they change over time. Relationships with partners, parents, family members, children, neighbours, friends and the person you support, or the person who supports you, all change too; some to a greater extent than others.

This information looks at the emotional impact that caring has and the relationship you have with your child.

### If you are a parent caring for and supporting a family member or friend

Caring for another person, although often rewarding and satisfying, can sometimes mean that when you are particularly busy or worried your child or children feel that they miss out on their relationship with you.

You might for example be caring for a child with a disability, a frail aged parent or another member of your family with a chronic, disabling illness, an acquired brain injury, a mental illness or drug or alcohol related illness.

The dynamics of the family may be altered when the person you support lives within your family unit; in particular, when one or more of your children also provide that care.

### Tips from parents

- Try to make time for your children especially if they are feeling left out or even feeling jealous
- Try to arrange regular breaks from caring so that you can all re-charge your emotional batteries and spend quality time together
- Find ways to let your children know that you recognise and appreciate what they are able to do
- Consider talking to your children about other young carers, their relationships and the feelings they sometimes describe
- Let your children know that there is also a website at [www.youngcarers.net.au](http://www.youngcarers.net.au) and an information pack designed specifically for young carers. Help them if they need assistance to access these resources. The information pack is available from Commonwealth Carer Resource Centres\*.



## If you are a parent being cared for and supported by one or more of your children

For most people, including parents, the transition from independence to someone needing the support and care of others is not easy. Although you may want to do all the things you used to do, like paying accounts, shopping, driving and attending to all your own physical needs, you may no longer have the ability to do so.

It is not uncommon for parents going through this type of transition to experience a range of feelings that may at times include anger, powerlessness, resentment, helplessness, dependency, uselessness, sadness, loss and grief, depression, shame, guilt, impatience, frustration and even confusion. All these feelings are normal responses and reactions when going through a transition of this type.

Although these feelings can impact on all relationships, they most commonly impact on the relationship with the carer; in this case, this means the relationship you have with your child. If you are concerned about the impact this may have then you might find the following tips helpful.



## Tips from other parents

- Talk to your doctor or other health professional about how you are feeling and the impact that it is having on your wellbeing
- Contact the relevant illness, condition or disability-specific organisation and talk to them. They may be able to provide information and practical support and advice for both yourself and your child
- Talk with your child, at a level at which they will understand, about the changes that you are going through and how it is impacting on your emotional wellbeing. Talk about the strategies that, together and separately, you can put in place to help minimise the impact
- Let your child know the people they can trust to help support them
- Let your child know that, in spite of how you are feeling and reacting, you love them
- Try and set some time aside to do some fun things together. It's also good to have time apart doing fun things as well.



## LOOKING AFTER YOURSELF

### If you are a parent caring for and supporting a family member or friend

As a parent and a carer it can be difficult to balance your own needs with the needs of the person you are supporting, the needs of your family and the needs of your child or children. To be able to best support children who are also providing care, you need to also take care of yourself. It is not selfish to do this.

#### Tips from other parents

- Getting enough physical exercise, eating well and getting enough sleep and rest is not only important for everyone else in the family – it's important for you too
- Have time to yourself each week doing something you enjoy (like sport, getting out with friends or going to the movies)
- Identify your strengths as a parent and celebrate the things that you do well
- Ask for support or assistance when you need it. Better still, plan ahead so that it is available at other times as well
- Consider carer counselling. Counselling for carers is available through the Commonwealth Carer Resource Centre\*.

### If you are a parent being cared for and supported by one or more of your children

As a parent needing support and care from one or more of your children, it can sometimes be difficult to balance your own needs with those of your children. Just as you care for and want to provide the best quality care for your child or children, it is important to also take good care of yourself. It is not selfish or self centred to have the best quality of life you can.

#### Tips from other parents

- Find out what you can about your illness, disability or condition and your current prognosis
- If you are able to, contact the illness, disability or condition specific organisation closest to you for up to date information and to find out about support that may be available
- Do all that you can to support yourself physically, emotionally and mentally
- Try not to let your life revolve around your illness, condition or disability. In the same way that you would encourage your children to go out, try new things and meet new people, do the same yourself
- If you have periods of wellness, or times when you feel a little better, then plan your life around these times
- Although it may be difficult, ensure that you have the best quality of life you can at any one time.

## DISCUSSING THINGS AS A FAMILY

It's a good idea to start early to talk to your children about the illness, condition or disability. Initiate conversations and create the kind of atmosphere in which they can ask questions. Listening carefully to your child will help you know what they really want to know and what they already understand.

### If you are a parent caring for and supporting a family member or friend

Although all families and all care situations are different, being a carer occurs simultaneously with or alongside the normal activities of being a parent. Differences between family members and between families are quite normal because people are guided by their own situation, their own unique knowledge and their experience.

### Why discuss things as a family?

Although providing care and support can bring out the best in families, it also has the potential to create friction and discord. Instead of an atmosphere of shared support and care, conflict within families about care or changed relationships can create added stress for the whole family.

Discussing things as a family can help a family, especially with regard to children who share in the provision of care. Although all families are different, parents have said the benefits to children can include:

- Bringing up and discussing things as a family
- Planning not only the care that is needed but regular breaks as well
- Planning how to best look after each other as a family
- Planning quality time – together as a family and with peers.

## Tips from other parents

- Consider arranging a family meeting. Contact your Commonwealth Carer Resource Centre\* if you would like suggestions about how you might do this
- If available, and appropriate, provide information about the illness, condition or disability in a format that best suits your children. For example, video, CD, written information, website etc
- Together with your children draw up rosters/plans for sharing the care
- Plan how you might involve other relatives and friends. Together with your child or children draw up rosters/plans for sharing the care with others but be realistic about what others can provide. Draw up a list of one-off and ongoing tasks that need to be done. Keep others informed and let them know how they can help. Enlist their services
- Ensure that you each get to have some breaks from caring. Plan for and arrange regular breaks from caring by involving service providers or agencies in the community
- Involve your child or children in decisions about care
- Acknowledge and express appreciation for the help that your child or children are able to provide
- Make time for your children. Make time to do at least one special thing together every week
- Make time each day to talk. Not just about school, work or the care you each provide but in a meaningful way about the two of you. Discuss may be troubling or worrying each of you and try to solve the problem together. Be as open and honest as possible with each other
- Tiredness, emotional exhaustion and the lack of opportunity to relax can affect how you relate to your child or children. If this happens, reassure them that your feelings have not changed.

## If you are a parent being cared for and supported by one or more of your children

Needing support and care from an offspring is extremely difficult for most parents to come to terms with, especially if their carer is a child or a young person. Irrespective of their illness, condition or disability, to the best of their ability, parents are keen to support their child or children. This is especially so during periods of wellness the parent may experience.

### Why discuss things as a family?

Although providing care and support to a parent can be a positive experience, for many young carers it also impacts on social networks, school, college or university, employment and their emotional health and wellbeing.

Discussing things as a family can help create an atmosphere of support and understanding for your child and lessen any potential negative impact that might be the result of providing care. Although all families are different, parents being cared for by their child have said the benefits of discussing things as a family included:

- Bringing up and discussing things as a family
- Planning not only the care, but regular breaks as well, especially during periods of the parent's un-wellness
- Planning how to best look after each other as a family
- Planning quality time – together as a family and with peers.

## Tips from other parents

- Consider arranging a family meeting, including supportive relatives and friends. You might also consider inviting your case manager or support worker, if you have one, to the meeting. Contact your local illness, condition or disability-specific organisation to talk to someone about how best to arrange a family meeting and whether they can provide support or information
- If available, and appropriate, provide information about your illness, condition or disability in a format that best suits your children. For example, video, CD, written information, website etc
- To help support your child, consider calling the Commonwealth Carer Resource Centre\* to talk to them about information and support that is available to young carers
- Together with your children draw up rosters/plans for sharing the care with others. Plan how you might involve other relatives and friends. Be realistic about what others can provide. Draw up a list of one-off and ongoing tasks that need to be done. Keep others informed and let them know how they can help. Enlist their services
- Be aware that your child needs regular breaks from the responsibility of caring. Encourage them to take breaks by planning for and arranging for respite through service providers or agencies in the community





- Involve your child or children in decisions about your care
- Acknowledge and express appreciation for the help that your child or children are able to provide
- Make time for your child or children for doing special things together each week that are not related to your care
- Make time each day to talk about things other than your care and household responsibilities
- How you are feeling physically and emotionally can affect how you relate to your child. Reassure them that your feelings have not changed
- Tiredness, emotional exhaustion and the lack of opportunity to relax can affect how your child relates to you, their siblings, other family members and their peers. It can also affect their health and wellbeing and how they cope with or manage the pressures of school, college and work. Discuss these issues in family meetings to plan how your child can be best supported.

## CELEBRATING THE POSITIVES

We all get caught up, sometimes, in day to day living especially when it seems that there are so many things to do and so many things to attend to. This can be especially so for parents. Whether you are a parent providing care, or a parent who needs additional support from one of your children in order to manage your illness, condition or disability, it is important to take time to celebrate the positives!

Acknowledging positives has a secondary effect too. It helps put things into perspective. When parents, children and young people are tired, exhausted or worried it is easy to focus only on the negative impact of the illness, condition or disability or on providing care and support. It's important to remember that even when things are tough going, there are positives to be found as well.

Some of the positives that other parents say they have celebrated with their children include:

- Simply getting through the day, especially when things are really tough
- Planning for and taking a break, even if the break has only been for a very short period of time
- Involving other people in the care and support that's needed
- Deliberately taking time out for pampering. For some people pampering themselves includes reading a book; watching a favourite movie; taking a long relaxing bath; going for a walk; catching up with a friend; doing absolutely nothing for a period of time and not feeling guilty
- Attending to their own health and wellbeing needs.

## WHEN IT ALL SEEMS TO GO WRONG, WHAT HELP IS THERE?

Sometimes, no matter how well things have been planned, an emergency or situation develops or things mount up, to an extent that things seem to be out of control. Although these are natural occurrences in life, and quite normal, they are often difficult to deal with. This can be especially so for parents who are also carers, or for parents who need additional support to manage their illness, condition or disability.

Although it is difficult to plan for these things in advance, some parents have found it helpful to develop an Emergency Care Plan based on the needs of their family along with the needs of the person being supported.

### Tips for parents caring for and supporting a family member or friend

#### An Emergency Care Plan for your family

Having an emergency care plan is an important aspect of feeling safe. It can also reassure your child and the person that you are caring for.

Your emergency care plan might include the details about alternative arrangements for your child or children, along with the person you are caring for if you suddenly become ill or have an accident or an emergency. It is important to develop your Emergency Care Plan in consultation with your child or children.

In an emergency it is helpful to have a list of the people and service providers (along with their contact details) who will need to be contacted. It is a good idea to plan ahead of time with family, friends and service providers who will need to be involved. Then, if anything does happen unexpectedly, it's only a matter of making phone calls to the relevant people.

A free Emergency Care Kit is available. You can get a copy of it from the Commonwealth Carer Resource Centre\*. The Kit contains an Emergency Care Plan, Medi-List and Carer Emergency Card.

#### Your child's own Emergency Plan

All children and young people need to have an emergency plan in place for times when things go wrong. The Young Carers website at [www.youngcarers.net.au](http://www.youngcarers.net.au) has been developed specifically for and about young carers, and has a questionnaire for children and young people to complete about the type of care and support they would need in an emergency.

#### Emergency help

- If you have been receiving services from a local illness, condition or disability-specific organisation then consider contacting them to talk about support they may be able to provide
- Contact your Commonwealth Carer Resource Centre\* to talk about the support that may be available in your area. Carers can also receive free information about a range of topics along with referral to relevant services
- Contact the Commonwealth Carelink Centre for free information about community aged care, disability and other support services in your local area. Carelink has knowledge about the range of services available and how to contact them, who is eligible to receive the services and the cost.

## Tips for parents being cared for and supported by one or more of their children

### An Emergency Care Plan for your family

If you have periods of being unwell, it is a good idea to include plans for those periods when you may not be able to manage. Having an Emergency Care Plan is an important aspect of providing support and reassurance to your child about that period of time. If your child is not old enough or also has the responsibility of younger siblings then your Emergency Care Plan needs to include arrangements for these children as well.

It is important to develop your Emergency Care Plan in consultation with the child or children who are providing your care or support.

Your emergency care plan might include the details about alternative arrangements for your child if you suddenly become unwell or have an accident.

In an emergency it is helpful to have a list of the people and service providers (along with their contact details) who will need to be contacted.

It is a good idea to plan ahead of time with family, friends and service providers who will need to be involved. Then, if anything does happen unexpectedly, it's only a matter of making phone calls to the relevant people.

A free Emergency Care Kit is available to young carers from the Commonwealth Carer Resource Centre\*. The Kit contains an Emergency Care Plan, Medi-List and Carer Emergency Card.



### Your child's own Emergency Plan

All children and young people need to have an emergency plan in place for times when things go wrong. The Young Carers website at [www.youngcarers.net.au](http://www.youngcarers.net.au) has been developed specifically for and about young carers, and has a questionnaire for children and young people to complete about the type of care and support they would need in an emergency.

### Emergency help

If you have been receiving services from a local illness, condition or disability-specific organisation then consider contacting them to talk about support they may be able to provide to you and your family. If you know ahead of time that you will be unable to ask for their support when you need it, then make sure that you have included this in your Emergency Care Plan for someone to do.

## WHAT OTHER SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE FOR PARENTS AND YOUNG CARERS?

### Taking a break from caring (respite)

Taking a break from caring is referred to as *respite*. Regular breaks from caring can help to relieve the stress and exhaustion you may feel from time to time. Breaks can also help renew your energies, help maintain existing friendships and relationships as well as providing the opportunity to develop new ones. Breaks can also provide benefits to the person being cared for.

There are over 90 Commonwealth Carer Respite Centres\*\* and outlets around Australia to support carers to access respite.

Breaks are often available for family members individually or as a whole family. Commonwealth Carer Respite Centres work to meet the family's specific needs.



### Carer Counselling

Many people are put off by the word 'counselling' and are afraid to ask for help. Counselling is about talking with someone who can help you make a difference in your caring role and your life. Seeking counselling doesn't mean failure or that you are not coping or are inadequate. It's about looking after yourself.

Carers seek counselling for a number of reasons. Short term counselling focuses on:

- Managing stress
- Coping skills
- Grief and loss issues
- Practical problem-solving techniques
- Emotional support
- Health and wellbeing.

Carer counselling is provided through the Commonwealth Carer Resource Centre\* in each state and territory.

## WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION AND HELP FOR YOUNG CARERS?

**Young Carer Workers** have been employed in every state and territory to help young carers get the support they need. You can contact them through your Commonwealth Carer Resource Centre\*.

**Support Groups** give young carers a chance to meet others in the same situation as themselves, to talk through any issues they might have with people who understand and to have fun in a safe and positive environment.

Sometimes they're run face-to-face but they can also be on the phone or over the internet. Contact your Commonwealth Carer Resource Centre\* for ideas about what groups are running.

**Youth Centres.** In most towns and cities there is a youth centre, a youth club or sports and recreational facility where young people can hang out, talk to a worker and meet other young people. Youth Centres often have good ideas about what other services and supports are available and can link young people with others who can help them in their caring role.

**Youth Health Centres** are like youth centres but they might have doctors, nurses and counsellors to help with any health issues they may have. Young people can often get a free and confidential appointment.

**Primary and secondary schools** provide information and support to young carers within the school environment.

**Counselling** for young carers is available through your Commonwealth Carer Resource Centre\*. In addition, counsellors who work with young people are often available through schools, colleges, TAFEs, universities and youth health centres.

**Respite.** Commonwealth Carer Respite Centres\*\* can provide information and help young carers take a break.