

# Looking After Yourself



# Welcome



**Do you look after a family member or friend who could not manage without your support? Then you are a carer.**

Whether due to disability, illness, addiction or general frailty, someone may need your extra help for a short time or for many years. The support you provide might be physical, emotional – or often both.

No matter who you are or who you care for, Carers Link is here to support you.

In their 2012 report “In Sickness and in Health” Carers UK found that 87% of carers in Scotland said that caring had a negative impact on their physical and/or mental health. This leaflet will encourage you to look after your own health and wellbeing and give you ideas on how you can do this.

*“It never fails to amaze me just how much time is devoted to a loved one.”*

Sometimes the sheer amount of time and energy you dedicate to caring for someone can make you forget that you are very important too. Looking after your own emotional and physical health is essential if you want to get the most out of life and build the inner resources you need to help you continue with caring.

Carers Link can offer you one to one support, dedicated to exploring your own health and wellbeing. You will be encouraged and supported to make small changes that could make a big difference to your physical and mental health and wellbeing.

*“... I started talking to my family again and I am now getting support with caring for my wife from them.”*



*“Thinking about my wellbeing made me a stronger person.”*

*“It is good for us to step back a moment and consider what we are doing and how we are looking after ourselves.”*

# Common feelings

Caring for someone can be very rewarding and give you a lot of happiness, but it can sometimes feel like a huge responsibility.

You may resent your caring role and the impact it's had on your life, but then feel guilty for feeling this way. It is important to know that you're not alone, many carers feel like this.

Caring can place great strain on your relationships, both with the person you care for and with the rest of your family and friends.

We run various courses that might help you to deal with things such as changes in relationships or feelings of guilt.

*"Nobody goes into caring voluntarily, it just happens. You just suddenly wake up one day and you've got to start caring for somebody and that process can be extremely difficult and it can be extremely lonely."*



Get the support you  
need to look after  
yourself



# It's good to talk

Talking with others is a fundamental part of our lives, yet caring for someone can be an isolating experience. This is where Carers Link can help. Whether it's a chat about your day-to-day experiences or a specific problem that you'd like to talk through, you can:



*"You have saved me from going under a few times. It's nice to have someone you can talk to when you don't want to bore your friends with your troubles."*

- Talk things over with our Support Team
- Make an appointment with our Wellbeing Co-ordinator
- Chat regularly with one of our trained volunteers on our Carers Call service
- Come along to our carer groups – the kettle is always on, and some groups include lunch



Reach out to others

# Looking after you

Staying as fit, healthy and strong as possible is so crucial when you want to continue caring and have to be able to do so. We all know the effects that diet, exercise, and coffee and alcohol intake can have on our bodies.

However when you're caring for someone and have less time to think about your own needs, it can be difficult to get the balance right. If you're concerned about your health, chat with your GP and make sure that he/she knows that you are a carer.

Stress, worry, guilt and isolation are common feelings when caring for someone. Time away from caring is essential for you, but you may find it difficult to get a regular break.

*"I do push myself to get out a bit every day. I go for walks and I try to practice mindfulness. My wife was in respite for the first time and I really benefited from this despite being very anxious."*



Eat well

Everyone deserves time off, so try not to feel guilty about needing this – having a chance to ‘recharge your batteries’ helps both you and the person you look after.

Are you at a point of crisis? Feeling that you can’t continue in your caring role? As well as taking time out during the day, Respite and Short Breaks may be available so that you can get a longer break from caring. To access these you will need to complete a Carers Assessment, and we can help you with this.



*“I really enjoyed Carers Link Health walk today. The exercise was great and I met all those nice people. Talking whilst walking is a great way of getting to know each other.”*



Get active



# Getting more out of life

Making the effort to maintain links with friends, family, hobbies and leisure activities can be invaluable and can stop you feeling isolated.

Remember - you are important. Where possible, try to put aside time to have fun and enjoy yourself as this will help you to stay positive and take your mind off anything that might be worrying you.

You are guaranteed a warm welcome at our Carer Café groups which we run in a number of locations across East Dunbartonshire, these are open to all carers - and there's always a cup of tea and someone to chat to.



Feel part of your  
community



*"Two hours at the Carers Café  
and I feel like a different person"*



# Time for you

Making and taking time for you might seem like a luxury and difficult to organise but finding a way to relax and gain some distance from your day to day caring role will improve your wellbeing.


Whether it's an hour in the bath, a relaxing massage, a good walk, a yoga class or joining a community choir, it will all help you combat stress and sleep better.

Carers Link run mindfulness and stress management sessions all of which aim to help you relax and cope better. Please give us a call if you'd like to find out more.

Make a date with yourself and try to keep it!



Plan time for you



*"I joined a walking group and made new friends while getting some much needed fresh air."*

# Feeling stressed?

No matter who you are, or who you care for, looking after someone can be stressful. Juggling the demands of caring with all your other commitments can be overwhelming, and at times you may feel unable to cope.

Some common signs of stress to look out for are:

- Physical changes – headaches, indigestion, heartburn, chest pain, frequent crying, sleep problems and constant tiredness
- Emotional changes – anxiety, fear, guilt, anger, irritability, persistent low mood and frustration

If you recognise any of these symptoms, it might help to talk things over with family, friends or a member of the Carers Link team – and of course, your GP will be able to help.

We also run regular sessions where you can learn coping techniques to manage your stress, and to help you relax.

The important thing to remember is that you're not on your own. Carers Link's support workers are here to listen, and our Carers Call volunteers can keep in touch regularly to see how things are going.



Identify what makes you stressed

# Useful tips



You can find details of our groups and events for carers in our quarterly 'What's On' newsletter, and on the calendar page on our website at [www.carerslink.org.uk](http://www.carerslink.org.uk).

Let us know which ones you'd like to attend, and we'll do the rest.

If you're not able to attend an event, many of our sessions are available in our online learning hub which you can access through our website at [carerslink.org.uk/learning-hub/](http://carerslink.org.uk/learning-hub/).

# Contact us



**Telephone:** 0141 955 2131

**Freephone:** 0800 975 2131

**Email:** [enquiry@carerslink.org.uk](mailto:enquiry@carerslink.org.uk)

**Office:** Enterprise Centre, Ellangowan Road  
Milngavie G62 8PH



**Normal Hours:** Monday - Friday 8.30am to 5pm  
(Appointments outwith these hours can be arranged)

**Website:** [carerslink.org.uk](http://carerslink.org.uk)

**Facebook:** [facebook.com/CarersLink](https://facebook.com/CarersLink)

**Twitter:** [twitter.com/CarersLinkED](https://twitter.com/CarersLinkED)

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This leaflet is also available in large print and electronically, please contact us for a copy

**Building Healthier &  
Happier Communities**



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