



What might caring really mean for you?

The rewards and challenges of caring

Taking on a caring role is just like taking on a new job - there will be rewards as well as challenges. Understanding these can help prepare you for the role you are about to take on.

*"I had no idea what caring might involve.
I just took every hour, day, week and month as it came."*

What are the benefits of caring for a family member?

People who are caring for a family member or friend say there are many rewards including:

- ▣ A sense of satisfaction helping someone in need.
- ▣ Strengthening the relationship with your family member.
- ▣ Knowing that you have done the best you could.
- ▣ Proving to yourself that you can meet a challenge.
- ▣ Receiving the acknowledgement of family and friends.
- ▣ Feeling appreciation from your family member.

What are the challenges in caring for a family member?

While caring for a family member or friend can be incredibly rewarding, it can also be quite demanding. Depending on the nature of your caring role it may place considerable restrictions on your life. People who have become carers say that sometimes, caring can:

- ▣ be physically draining;
- ▣ be emotionally taxing;
- ▣ compromise your own health;
- ▣ restrict your social life;
- ▣ reduce your contact with family and friends as some pull away;
- ▣ take away your freedom and spontaneity; and
- ▣ impact on you financially.

*"I did not realise how much of my own life
would have to be put on hold."*

In some situations caring can become so all-consuming that carers lose their sense of identity - of the person they really are. The challenge is to balance your own needs with those of your family member, so that you look after yourself too.

How to care for your family member and yourself too

One of the main ways to ensure that you are able to continue caring for your family member or friend is to take time out for yourself. Although this may feel like a luxury, it is essential - none of us work 24-hour days, 365 days a year! Here are some suggestions:

Find time for yourself - every day

Try to take time for yourself every day to do something you enjoy. This may be reading the paper, calling a friend or having a coffee in bed. It may be 5 minutes or an hour - importantly it will give you a small break in a day filled with routine.



Have someone to talk to

Find someone to talk to, on the good days as well as the not-so-good days. You could talk to family, friends, other carers or contact the [Commonwealth Carer Resource Centre](#) on 1800 242 636* for support.

Keep healthy

Visit your GP for regular check-ups - don't put this off. Talk to them about your caring role and how you are feeling.

Keep up your interests

Try to stay involved in some of the things you enjoy - you may even decide to take up a new interest or hobby, something you always wanted to do. This might be writing, building models, painting, photography, music, gym or dance. It will give you something else to think about and something to talk about outside of caring.

Accept a little help

Accepting help is not a sign of failure. Rather it may relieve some of the pressure and help you to keep on caring. Help may be from family, friends or support services - it might be at set days and times or on an as-needed basis. Be upfront with family and ask for the help you need - they won't know if you don't tell them. Contact your local council to find out more about services available in your area.

*"I was reluctant to use respite at first. I felt so guilty.
I can't imagine being without it now - it helps keep me going."*

Find out about respite care

Respite is available so that you can take a break while your family member is being cared for. It is available in many forms including in-home respite, day respite, overnight respite, holiday respite, carer retreats and residential respite. Find out more by contacting the Commonwealth Carer Respite Centre on 1800 059 059*.

Further information:

- ☒ [Respite care - get the break you need](#) - information sheet.
- ☒ [Services and support just for carers](#) - information sheet.

Contact the [Commonwealth Carer Resource Centre](#) on 1800 242 636* to request the above information sheets be sent to you - or to find out about other information sheets in this series.

*Free call except from mobile phones. Mobile calls at mobile rates.

We do our best to keep these links up to date, but the internet changes all the time. If you can no longer access any of the above resources, please go to our [Internet Troubleshooting Guide](#), or email us at website@carersvic.org.au