

CARERS: LOOKING AFTER YOURSELF AND YOUR FAMILY

CARERS: LOOKING AFTER YOURSELF AND YOUR FAMILY

**WayAhead
Mental Health Information Service
Level 5, 80 William St
Woolloomooloo NSW 2011**

**1300 794 991
info@wayahead.org.au
www.wayahead.org.au**

Contents

Contents

The needs of others in the family

Children in the family

Looking after you

How to care for you

Where do I go for help?

Your local doctor (GP)

Mental Health Carers ARAFMI

Mental Health Information Line

Carers NSW

Other useful websites

**“Loving
someone
with a
mental
illness is a
lonely job”**

Rachel Linton

The needs of others in the family

Caring for someone with a Mental Illness can affect the dynamics of the family. Often the caring role takes most of the caregiver's patience, time and energy. Grief may also be involved both for the loss of the person's former personality, achievements and contributions as well as the family's lifestyle. This grief can lead to passive or aggressive hostility and anger. When other family members start contributing towards the care of another person, their own health and wellbeing may be neglected.

Children

Children may not fully comprehend what is happening when someone is living with a Mental Illness or Disorder. They can often gauge the stress the family is experiencing, and not actually ask or understand what the issues are. They may withdraw, or pretend that the change in the family does not exist.

Alternatively, they may start contributing greatly towards the household and show signs of "growing up too quickly." Other children may demonstrate anger and irritability and choose to spend more time away from their family home.

Specific resources have been developed to help explain Mental Illness to children and there are resources, set out, at the end of this document.

Looking after you

Carers and families play a vital role in the monitoring, treatment and support of those living with a Mental Illness.

Many carers find it difficult to address their own needs and they may find simple things like going for a walk or reading a book very difficult to achieve.

Sometimes carers persist with their role to the point of exhaustion and breakdown.

The situation can lead to issues of guilt and blame if the carer feels responsible for the person's Mental Illness or believes they are not doing a good enough job of caring. They may think that by taking "more" or "better" care the person will recover from their Mental Illness.

If carers take on such a huge burden of responsibility it can have a negative impact on their own mental and physical health. An exhausted, frustrated and emotionally drained carer will find it difficult to keep on giving.

How to care for you

- Give yourself permission to take breaks without guilt and know it is your right, as a carer, to do so.
- Devote at least 30 minutes a day to yourself doing what you enjoy: going for a walk, talking with a friend, reading a book, sitting down with a cup of tea and watching your favourite television show – or whatever you choose.
- Plan for longer breaks and use Respite Services if they are available
- Attend a support group for friends and family
- Avoid extra pressures and unnecessary tasks
- Get out of the house, at least once a day
- Eat regular, healthy meals
- Exercise regularly
- Achieve adequate sleep



Where do I go for help?

The WayAhead Directory

is an online resource providing a comprehensive list of mental health related services in NSW.

www.WayAhead.org.au

Phone Lines

WayAhead Mental Health
Information Line

1300 794 991

Contact your doctor or local GP

Mental Health Carers ARAFMI

1800 655 198

Carers Line

1800 242 636

Australian Psychological Society

1800 333 497

Useful Websites

Mental Health Carers ARAFMI

www.arafmi.org

Commonwealth Carers
Respite Centers

www.centrelink.gov.au

Children of Parents with Mental
Illness (COPMI)

www.copmi.net.au



Translating & Interpreting Service
(TIS) 131 450

Please call the Mental Health
Information Line through the
Telephone Interpreter Service
(TIS). Free to Australian citizens or
permanent residents.

Disclaimer

This information is for educational purposes. As neither brochures nor websites can diagnose people it is always important to obtain professional advice and/or help when needed.

This information may be reproduced with an acknowledgement to the Mental Health Association NSW.

The Association encourages feedback and welcomes comments about the information provided.

Last reviewed by Jamie Saltoon 2016

**“ I found people who
understood exactly what I
was going through ”**



