
SUPPORT FOR MENTAL HEALTH CARERS

During the Coronavirus Pandemic

It is recognised that the new situation that carers find themselves in can be confusing and demanding – even tough. When we say mental health carers, we mean families, partners and friends supporting someone living with a serious and severe mental illness.

Are you a mental health carer? If so, you are not alone. Support is available here to help you to get through this.

We are all going to need to be mindful of our physical and emotional health and well-being each day during the pandemic, more so if you are also caring for others.

It's very important that we keep in touch with friends and family during this pandemic. Simple things like setting up a telephone rota to make sure we make regular contact can make a difference for those living on their own or are feeling isolated.

Making the most of the internet is also key for everyone during these challenging times. There are lots of technology aids such as WhatsApp or Messenger which allows multiple people to communicate together, so consider setting up a family or friend group chat. Regular video calls using FaceTime or Zoom (others are available) can be a fun and cheap way to keep in touch with loved ones.

If you're a mental health carer and need to talk, need support—get in touch with CAUSE—where you can chat with an experienced CAUSE Carer Advocate or to another carer in one of our support groups—people who have been through the same journey as you ie caring for someone living with a serious mental illness. People who can help you connect virtually and remotely.

As a peer led organisation, run by carers for carers in mental health, CAUSE should be your first port of call – support is available to help you get through this.

CAUSE Helpline 0800 103 2833

Monday, Wednesday & Friday 10am—4pm

Tuesday & Thursday 12noon—8pm

www.cause.org.uk

Connect

There is strong evidence that indicates that feeling close to, and valued by, other people is a fundamental human need and one that contributes to functioning well in the world.

It's clear that social relationships are critical for promoting well-being and for acting as a buffer against mental ill health for people of all ages.

With this in mind, try to do something different today and make a connection.

- Talk to someone by phone instead of texting
- Speak to someone you haven't spoken to for a long time
- Ask how someone's weekend was and really listen when they tell you
- Put five minutes aside to find out how someone really is
- Email or text a colleague from work and ask how they are coping with working from home

We have a lot of information on [our website](#) about [getting connecting online](#) and [making the most of the internet](#).

If you need any help to get connected virtually online please get in touch by call the team on 028 90 650 650 or email: info@cause.org.uk

If you need to talk, do find someone to talk to, to let off steam yourself - another carer, a support group, a professional who can listen to you / help you / advise you on caring for your loved one.

As a peer-led organisation CAUSE should be a first port of call for you in talking to them about your experiences and getting support.

Be Active

Being active for one hour is just 4% of your day!

Regular physical activity is associated with lower rates of depression and anxiety across all age groups.

Exercise is essential for slowing age-related cognitive decline and for promoting well-being.

But it doesn't need to be particularly intense for you to feel good – slower-paced activities, such as walking, can have the benefit of encouraging social interactions as well providing some level of exercise.

Today, why not get physical? Here are a few ideas:

- Take the stairs
- Go for a walk
- Walk with someone of your household – so you can 'connect' as well
- Walk the dog
- Have a kick-about in your garden
- Do some 'easy exercise', like stretching
- Housework and gardening are both exerting
- Start dancing—bop in your bubble with [CAUSE to Dance](#)

Keep checking CAUSE website and social media for current exercise based online sessions and activities.

www.cause.org.uk

Try to link this action with other actions in the Five Ways to Well-being eg Be Active while Learning something new in a new fitness class you have not tried before.

Learn

You can take this opportunity to know what other help you can get: your rights and entitlements. Knowing what is out there to support you and what help you can access is crucial. It can be one of the first steps in effectively managing everyday as a carer.

Continued learning through life enhances self-esteem and encourages social interaction and a more active life.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the opportunity to engage in work or educational activities particularly helps to lift older people out of depression.

The practice of setting goals, which is related to adult learning in particular, has been strongly associated with higher levels of well-being.

Why not learn something new today? Here are a few more ideas:

- Find out something about your work colleagues
- Sign up for a class
- Read a book from your bucket list
- Even set up a book club
- Do a crossword or Sudoku
- Research something you've always wondered about
- Learn a new word
- Revisit an old activity
- If you are a mental health carer, there is information and support for you on our [web-site](#).
- If you are a mental health carer why not join **CAUSE Carers Craft Club** by calling 028 90 650 650 or emailing info@cause.org.uk

Try to link this action in the Five Ways to Well-being. For example, keep learning while connecting with others, ask a friend to join a course with you, try a new fitness class to be active, take notice of how you are progressing at your new skill.

Take Notice

Reminding yourself to 'take notice' can strengthen and broaden awareness.

Studies have shown that being aware of what is taking place in the present directly enhances your well-being and savouring 'the moment' can help to reaffirm your life priorities.

Heightened awareness also enhances your self-understanding and allows you to make positive choices based on your own values and motivations.

Take some time to enjoy the moment and the environment around you. Here are a few ideas:

- Get a plant for your home
- Have a 'clear the clutter' day
- Take notice of how your family and colleagues are feeling or acting
- After lock-down take a different route on your journey to or from work
- Have a session of '**Meditation for Strength**' with CAUSE Carer Advocate, Moira Harper YFNI Tutor YTI Tutor & Assessor
- Keep checking [CAUSE website](#) and social media for updates on the pandemic and support for mental health carers

Try to link this action with other actions in the Five Ways to Well-being. For example, take notice when you are walking, or take notice of how the people you connect with are doing.

Give

Participation in social and community life has attracted a lot of attention in the field of well-being research. So get online during lock-down and give your time to others – giving is receiving!

Individuals who report a greater interest in helping others are more likely to rate themselves as happy.

Research into actions for promoting happiness has shown that committing an act of kindness once a week over a six-week period is associated with an increase in well-being.

Tips for Giving

- Thank someone for something they have done for you
- Ask a colleague to join you for an online virtual lunch or a coffee
- Offer to help a family member or household friend with a DIY project or ‘Knit for CAUSE’
- Help someone who might be in need
- [Volunteer](#)—give a little time if you can and help a charity close to your heart
- [Support CAUSE](#)

Whilst giving to others is a great gift, you should be kind to yourself and recharge your batteries. You will need it. Have a carer’s assessment – it’s a legal right – it can help you to identify where help and support may be available to further enhance your ability to care and to help you stay well yourself. It may be difficult to go through this process (for example, admitting how much you actually do) but it should help you to resolve things in a more positive light.

CAUSE offers a range of services to support you as they understand the stresses involved in caring on many fronts.

www.cause.org.uk

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