

# CARING FOR SOMEONE WHO HAS DEPRESSION



Caring for a family member or friend who has depression can be physically demanding and emotionally draining. But taking care of your own health and wellbeing is important in order to cope with the demands of caring.

Everyone feels sad or blue at some time of their life. But when you have depression those feelings are persistent; interfering with daily activities and affecting physical and mental health.

People with depression can experience a wide range of symptoms such as:

- persistent sadness
- feelings of hopelessness
- feeling unable to cope with everyday things
- not wanting to go out or go to work
- fatigue
- irritability
- loss of appetite
- trouble sleeping, and
- difficulty concentrating.

In extreme cases, people may have thoughts of self-harm or suicide.

**Families and carers should be recognised, respected and supported as partners in providing care to the consumer.<sup>1</sup>**

The journey towards recovery may be long and difficult and caring for someone with depression might involve a range of supports. This may include:

- providing emotional support and encouragement
- supervising medication
- accompanying the person to medical and therapist appointments, and
- assisting with daily activities such as shopping, banking, cooking and cleaning.

While caring can bring many positive rewards, over time it can also have a negative impact on the carer's physical health. It can be exhausting, unpredictable, frustrating and at times heartbreaking.

It is important to know that you are not alone and that help is available.

## QUICK TIPS

When you are caring for someone else you often put your own needs last. These tips are a reminder that your own health and wellbeing is important. Staying strong will help you to better cope with the demands of caring.

- **Eat well** - A nutritious balanced diet will give you the fuel your body needs to keep on caring.
- **Exercise regularly** - Physical exercise can relieve tension and reduce stress levels.
- **Sleep well** - Caring can be exhausting so try and get eight hours sleep every night.
- **Share the care** - Let family members and friends know that their help and support is welcome.
- **Talk it over** - With a friend or family member or with a professional counsellor. Join a Carer Support Group and meet other people to share tips and experiences.
- **Take a break** - Do something that you love... or do nothing but relax and recharge your batteries.

**Contact the Carer Advisory Line for more information 1800 514 845.**

1. Cummins, Robert A (2007) *The Wellbeing of Australians – Carer Health and Wellbeing*. Deakin University, Geelong.

## INFORMATION

It can be frustrating not understanding the symptoms and behaviours of the person you care for. Arming yourself with information can help you (and the person you care for) to feel more in control and confident. For information about depression, visit [www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au) or phone 1300 224 636.

## SUPPORT FOR THE PERSON YOU CARE FOR

The mental health system is a complex configuration of many different services, comprised of public and private, government, hospital and community based components.

For information about when, how and where to access mental health support speak to your family GP or visit [www.headtohealth.gov.au](http://www.headtohealth.gov.au).

## SUPPORT FOR YOU

There are a number of organisations which offer supports and services to help families to manage the impact of mental illness on their lives. The Carers Victoria [Carer Advisory Line 1800 514 845](tel:1800514845) is a good place to start. We can give you advice and information about the supports and services to help you.



### FOR MORE INFORMATION

See our flyer '[Carers Who Have Depression](#)'.