

Taking care of yourself

Your health and needs

Mental ill health is unpredictable and emotionally taxing. Carers often feel that they “walk on eggshells” in order not to upset the painstakingly achieved balance that has been established. This can be very limiting for both the carer and the service user, and gives little scope for moving forward. Where there is a good level of trust and open communication between them, the service user feels more understood and supported, and their everyday anxieties are less likely to grow into major problems. For the carer, it results in greater understanding of the problems, and being able to act in a constructive way rather than worrying about pushing the service user too far too soon, and doing nothing because of the risk of relapse. Mutual understanding also increases the chances of planning breaks or time out for the carer.

Carers can feel guilty about taking time for themselves, but it is crucial that they do – one in three carers becomes ill with stress-related disorders.

For yourself:

Remember that you are only human and have needs of your own. Continually putting them off, or not allowing time for yourself, will only make you resentful, irritable and could eventually make you unwell.

- Allow time each week to do something you enjoy, something to make you feel relaxed, refreshed and that life is good.
- Eat and sleep regularly and well. Poor sleep and diet will only add to your overall stress levels.
- Exercise as much as possible – even a short brisk walk will help.
- Plan to take regular time out and/or holidays – and take them.
- Put in clear boundaries with the person you care for. Be clear about what you can and cannot do – and stick to it.
- Ensure that there is at least one supportive person with whom you can talk confidentially. It is really easy to lose your perspective and sense of humour if you feel isolated.
- Remember that your GP can be a source of help. Take a friend or advocate with you if you think you do not know how or may not be able to tell your doctor what you are feeling.
- Knowing about the illness or disorder that you are dealing with will help you to understand it and act appropriately, even if the person you care for does not want to know.
- Joining a Carers Group helps relieve isolation, stress, loss of humour and loneliness, as well as helping you to understand different types of illness and disorder. Please refer to the ‘Where to get help’ section.
- Seek advice from the team involved with providing care if you can – if not an advocate can help to get answers for you.
- If you should be receiving services that you are not getting, don’t be too proud or too afraid to complain – don’t just cope all by yourself, seek help from an advocate - see the ‘where to get help’ section of this pack.

Counselling

Counselling can help you to express feelings and emotions, safely and confidentially. It can help you to understand why you feel stressed, angry, resentful, help to maintain a sense of perspective or new coping strategies.

Carers UK – The Voice of Carers

www.carersuk.org

Adviceline Tel: 0808 808 7777

info@carersuk.org

Carers UK

20 Great Dover Street

London

SE1 4LXT

British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy

www.bacp.co.uk

Information on counselling and registered counsellors

Tel: 01455 883 300

e-mail: bacp@bacp.co.uk

British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy

BACP House

15 St John's Business Park

Lutterworth

Leicestershire

LE17 4HB

WPF Therapy (Westminster Pastoral Foundation)

www.wpf.org.uk

General counselling service, with specific service for young people. Charges are made on a sliding scale according to how much you can afford.

email: reception@wpf.org.uk

Tel: 020 7378 2000

23 Magdalen Street

London

SE1 2EN

Education, training and leisure activities

Sources of information about educational and leisure activities:

- Leicester City Council www.leicester.gov.uk
- Leicester County Council www.leics.gov.uk
- Rutland County Council www.rutland.gov.uk
- LAMP www.lampdirect.org.uk
- Local library
- Local leisure centre or swimming pool
- Local community college
- Local community centre
- Local paper

Specific education and training about mental illness and caring

Leicestershire Recovery College

Leicestershire Recovery College delivers a wide range of recovery focused educational courses and resources to people with lived mental health experience, their friends, family and Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust staff.

The college offers people a range of courses designed to contribute to wellbeing and recovery, supporting people to recognise their own resourcefulness and skills in order to become experts in their own self-care and make informed choices and achieve the things they want in life.

The Recovery College is currently based in 3 Portacabins opposite the Bennion Centre on the Glenfield Hospital Site, Groby Road, Leicester. LE3 9DZ

Open to students 9:30am - 4:00pm, Monday - Friday

Courses are for adults over the age of 18 who access mental health services in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland, their friends, family and Leicestershire Partnership Trust staff.

No referral required. Anyone wishing to attend the college can enrol as a student by:

Email: recoverycollege@leicspart.nhs.uk

Telephone: 0116 295 1196

Online: www.leicspart.nhs.uk

Support for Carers – Leicestershire

www.supportforcarers.org

0845 689 9510

maureen@supportforcarers.org

Voluntary Action South Leicestershire

The Settling Rooms

St Mary's Place

Springfield Street

Market Harborough

Leicestershire

LE16 7DR

Offer an online course for carers with schizophrenia which is free and open to anyone

The Carers Centre

www.claspthecarerscentre.org.uk

0116 251 0999

enquiries@claspthecarerscentre.org.uk

CLASPTThe Carers Centre

Unit 19, 4th Floor Matrix House

Constitution Hill

Leicester

LE1 1PL

They offer a wide range of training for carers including:

- Dealing with Stress
- How to get Help & Support
- Understanding Personalisation
- Safer Moving and Assisting People
- First Aid
- Safe Handling of Medication
- Caring for someone with a Mental Health Condition
- Caring for someone with Dementia
- Carers Assessments and the Care Act 2014
- Caring with Confidence
- Relaxation
- Mindfulness

Additional to the existing list of training for carers, they are developing End of Life Care training and Preparing for Life after Caring training.

RETHINK

www.rethink.org

0121 522 7007

info@rethink.org

89 Albert Embankment

London

SE1 7TP

RETHINK provides services for carers of people with severe and enduring mental health problems in Leicester City, Leicestershire and Rutland. Provides education and training through the Carers Education and Training Programme (CETP). The website also has free factsheets including Carer's Assessment and Support Planning, etc.

LAMP (Leicestershire Action for Mental Health Project)

www.lampdirect.org.uk

0116 255 6286

lamp@lampdirect.org.uk

Provides services for carers of adults with mental health problems living in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland. This includes individual advocacy, support groups, training and The Carers Support Programme. Produces a directory of mental health services.

Complementary therapies

You may wish to consider some complementary therapies. It may be useful to inform your GP if you are considering Homeopathy, and if you do decide to go ahead with any complementary therapies, tell your therapist if you are taking any medication (whether this is prescribed by your GP or something you have bought for yourself).

Complementary and Natural Healthcare Council (CNHC)

UK voluntary regulator for complementary therapists

www.cnhc.org.uk

Acupuncture

Uses small needles inserted into the skin at specific points to balance or restore energy.

Aromatherapy

Uses the essential oils from plants to enhance physical and emotional well-being. The oils can be inhaled or massaged into the skin.

Homeopathy

Uses natural substances (known as remedies) which mimic symptoms. Substances used are very diluted and have very few harmful side effects.

Massage

Unblocks muscular tension, stimulates circulation and helps the body to eliminate waste (eg blocked sinus). Massage also gives a sense of physical comfort that can ease sadness and isolation.

Meditation

Through learning how to clear your mind of worries and control your breathing, meditation can provide periods of time that are peaceful and inwardly calm.

Reflexology

Works on a similar basis to acupuncture except that the energy pathways are released through reflex points on the feet or hands, each of which corresponds to an area of the body.

Shiatsu

Uses massage and/or finger pressure in a similar way to acupuncture. Also known as acupressure, it helps to release blocked energy and so stimulate healing.

Tai Chi

Uses movement based on martial arts exercises to increase energy and health.

Yoga

Aims to improve mind, body and spiritual functioning, using slow gentle stretching exercises and deep breathing techniques.