

Self-Care for Carers

As a carer to someone with cystic fibrosis (CF) it is incredibly important you don't forget to take care of yourself. Practicing self-care can build personal resilience, avoid stress from becoming overwhelming and can prevent the development of more persistent symptoms of anxiety or depression.

Anxiety and/or depression is common amongst those caring for someone with a chronic illness. A carer isn't just a parent, many others take on caring roles for someone with CF, such as a partner, grandparent, sibling/offspring or another extended family member. No matter how big or small your role in helping to care is, practicing self-care can have huge benefits to your mental health, and help you cope better during times of stress such as clinic visits, hospital admissions and illness.

What is Self Care?

Self-care refers to activities that preserve and maintain one's physical, emotional and mental health. It is an ongoing commitment to look after yourself through helpful behaviours that protect your health during periods of stress.

Paying attention to what is happening to your body, both physically and emotionally, helps you to identify when something is affecting you. It is important to take time out when you need it to reduce feelings of stress and protect your mental health.



Here are some suggestions of ways to implement self-care:

Physical

- Eat a healthy, balanced diet.
- Exercise a few times a week.
- Make time for activities you enjoy and that help you to relax.
- Monitor and manage your stress in positive ways e.g. meditation, walking.
- Ensure you have enough sleep.
- Limit the use of alcohol.
- Seek respite when required.

Relationships

- Attend a [carers group](#) for support (CFWA run many carer events).
- Spend time with family and friends. Close personal relationships can be especially important during challenging times.
- Recognise when you need help from others and ask for support. E.g. friends, family, GP, psychologist or another health professional.

Work-life balance

- Try to achieve a balance between your professional role and your personal life and leave space outside of work for things you enjoy.
- Get involved and join a group with common interests.

Spirituality

- If you have spiritual beliefs, take time for regular spiritual practice or spend time with others who share your beliefs.
- Practice gratitude.

Find self-care activities that work for you and your needs, listen to your own mental and physical health and take time out when you need it.

Self Help Apps

- [MoodGYM](#): a free, structured five-module course covering information, assessments, self-help skills and exercises.
- [MyCompass](#): a free resource with a focus on building resilience and good mental health providing tips and exercises to maintain good mental health.
- [Smiling Mind](#): a daily mindfulness and meditation guide

Useful Resources

- [Mental Health Plan & Rebates Factsheet](#) (CFWA)
- [CFWA Counselling & Support](#)
- [Carers WA](#)
- [CF and Mental Health factsheet](#) (CF Foundation)

Last reviewed August 2020.

Cystic Fibrosis WA
The Niche
11 Aberdare Road
Nedlands WA 6009

T: +61 8 6224 4100
E: info@cfwa.org.au

Disclaimer: This publication is for general education and information purposes. Contact a qualified healthcare professional for any medical advice needed.
© Cystic Fibrosis Western Australia 2020