

SANE AUSTRALIA

SANE Australia Online Peer Group

Date: 21/10/2021

Title: Caring for yourself while caring for someone else

Description: So that we are able to best support the people in our lives, it's important that we remember to care for ourselves too. This can look different for everyone and it can be tricky to navigate the balance of caring for yourself and others for the same time. Join us for a conversation around self-care, prioritising our well-being and an opportunity to share and learn from each other.

Shaz51 Hello may not be here on time as I am cooking dinner

**CalmingNature
(Peer Worker)** Hi Shaz51, no worries! Hopefully you can join us later :)

Shaz51 I will @CalmingNature xxx

**CalmingNature
(Peer Worker)** Hi everyone! Welcome everyone to today's Peer Group Chat talking about caring for yourself while caring for

someone else. First, we'd like to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the various lands we are all joining this event from. We pay deep respect to the Elders of those Countries, past and present, and we further extend that respect to any Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people joining this group tonight. This always was and always will be Aboriginal land. This is a new peer support service we are running! Because of this, we really value your thoughts on how it goes, so we will send a link to a short survey at the end of this chat for you to complete. While this survey is optional, it is a chance to provide feedback for us to improve our services. In case you might need to leave part way through the event, you can access the survey here now:

https://sane.au1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5uUF0sHJRKQ6wyW .

Tonight, peer support workers @CalmingNature and @Girasole will be facilitating a discussion around the topic of looking after our mental health when caring for someone else. Whether you have lived experience of complex mental health issues, you care for someone who does, or both- anyone can benefit from thinking about how we look after ourselves when we are also taking care of others. We'll be moving through a number of discussion questions tonight, and it's entirely up to you how much or how little you are comfortable with sharing. Some of the conversation could be heavy in nature as we may talk about our mental health struggles.

@Pisces_1, who moderates on the SANE Forums, is working behind the scenes to ensure our safety. If you're having please see our FAQ :

<https://www.sane.org/peer-support/peer-group-chat/chat-faqs#what-if-i-am-having-a-tough-time-and-need-immediate-support>).

If you can't find an answer to your question there, please message @Pisces_1 directly. We're looking forward to creating a space where we can reflect and learn together and expand our ideas on how we can look after ourselves, managing the balance between caring for ourselves and others! Lastly, just so you're aware, the transcript of this group will be made available for download afterwards on SANE's Peer Support website.

CalmingNature
(Peer Worker)

Welcome everyone! We'll be starting the discussion shortly and will just allow a bit more time for people to log on and join 😊 In the meantime, feel free to introduce yourselves! I'm @CalmingNature

Girasole (Peer Worker) Hi @adge ! It's great to see you here :) Welcome

adge Hi @Girasole (Peer Worker)
Thanks for your Welcome.

CalmingNature (Peer Worker) **Caring for others can look different for everyone. What does caring for someone else look like for you?**

adge Can be Physical Care, Emotional Support, Advocating for someone.

Girasole (Peer Worker)

I can start us off if we like :) I have various loved ones in my life who are also affected by complex mental health, and I like to be able to be there for them when they are struggling. This is often periodic and fairly unpredictable- it generally doesn't involve regular, ongoing responsibilities. I've supported loved ones through panic, psychosis, eating disorders, addiction, trauma, and suicidal crisis

Girasole (Peer Worker)

@adge I like the inclusion of advocacy! Really valuable, I think

adge

All of Siblings have Physical & MH health conditions or challenges - Yet do Not Support each other. They deny any MH issues. The "Family" (interaction between Relatives) is fractured as a result.

pisces_1 (Moderator)

Whether it is on the phone or in person, i try to be available for loved ones. I also need to be reminded to listen to myself and make sure i have self care whilst supporting others too.

CalmingNature (Peer Worker)
Girasole (Peer Worker)

For me, I have cared for a friend who was struggling with addiction and other mental health issues. This involved a range of responsibilities on an everyday basis for an extended period of time. I have also cared for a family member with physical illness as well

@adge I'm sorry to hear - it can be difficult when people we care about deny any mental health issues they are having

CalmingNature (Peer Worker) **Self-care relates to looking after our own needs. What needs of yours are important to be met?**

adge The "Care" or Support that I provide - eg to my Mum (in her late 70's) who lives Interstate - Is emotional support over the Telephone. This may sound "Minimal" or distanced - Yet it is very draining emotionally.

adge I Physically Care for about 50 Finches (incl Canaries), Parrots & a Cat - They are all totally Dependent on me. There is No Backup Person (to Feed them) - Only me

pisces_1 (Moderator) Oh @adge it can sometimes be more draining over the phone because you have to work twice as hard, as you cannot see their reaction or behaviour

Girasole (Peer Worker) In terms of my needs, it's important that all the basics are there - I'm getting enough sleep, I'm eating regular meals, I'm showering, I have time to do my chores, and if I'm struggling, I can have access to support and a break

CalmingNature (Peer Worker) When I was caring for others, I found it really important to make sure I had time to myself and to make sure I was looking after myself with self care and giving myself a break when needed

adge My Self-Care Needs for Rest & Adequate Relaxation & Food - have not been met, over the past few weeks, due to prolonged Course & Pre-Job Stressors - Which lead to almost Total Burnout, emotional & physical exhaustion. I am in the Process of attemptation to Plan a Recovery from this Situation/ State (Right now).

Girasole (Peer Worker) oh @adge , that's so tough, I'm so sorry to hear that things have been so draining and you haven't been able to attend to your needs well lately. I'm glad to hear that you're looking at how you will be recovering from this situation, though

CalmingNature (Peer Worker) @adge I'm sorry that things have been so stressful and draining! It's good to hear that you're in the process of planning a recovery

CalmingNature (Peer Worker) **Have you ever learned what your boundaries are through your experiences, and realising a boundary needed to be put in place?**

adge Support & breaks were Absent, until the past few days - Until after reaching virtual Burnout - My Support Appointments & Contacts All had to be Cancelled to Accommodate the Online Training Inductions (20+ hours) + The 3 Day Full-Time Traffic Management/ Traffic Controller Course - So now my supports have begun to be Put back into Place, as much as possible.

CalmingNature (Peer Worker) @adge It sounds like the online training was a bit all-consuming which is understandably draining and can definitely lead to burnout. It's good to hear that you're putting some supports back in place for yourself during this time

Shaz51 Sometimes finding it hard to finding a balance between looking after my mum and my husband @CalmingNature

adge It's only After a Boundary has been Pushed Past (Trodden on) that I often realise it's too much - Or that there Needed to be Boundaries in Place (when there weren't)

Girasole (Peer Worker) True @adge , I find that's how it can be for me too!

CalmingNature (Peer Worker) @Shaz51 It can definitely be difficult to find a balance when looking after 2 people

Adge

I failed the Practical Assessment - Not due to lack of Performance.

Girasole (Peer Worker)

For example, I once supported a close friend through suicidal crisis in the early hours of the morning, for many hours. At the time I didn't have any conscious boundaries around sleep, but after that I realised I probably wouldn't be capable of doing that again. I have no regrets about supporting my friend, but I've since thought more about other people and services my friend can reach out to who are more awake and able to function at that time. I think that being aware of other supports available, and that the responsibility can be spread out, was very important for me to learn. It doesn't all have to come down to you

Girasole (Peer Worker)

Welcome @the magician! :)

adge

The Re-Booked Prac Assessment (for Yesterday/Wednesday) - has had to be Cancelled, at my Request &/or Agreement - To allow recovery time. The Job/ Work Shifts were scheduled to Start last Monday (3 days ago) - Immediately after the 1st (failed) Prac Assessment. So yes it's been Full-On....

adge

The Site Booted me out (Logged me Off) - So I had to Log back in, to Re-Type that last message....

Girasole (Peer Worker)

Oh sorry to hear that @adge ! I'm not sure why that happened. Thank you for letting us know

CalmingNature (Peer Worker)

If you were to take the time to ensure your needs are also being met, what would the impact of that look like in your life?

When My Needs are Being Met - Then I Am/ Can be far more Emotionally Available - I have Better Mind Concentration (focus), much more Physical

adge

Energy, & can show greater Compassion to others.

pisces_1
(Moderator)

I find having a selfcare routine helpful so my needs get met. I do not always follow the routine but i try to most days

CalmingNature
(Peer Worker)

I agree @adge when my needs are being met, I have more capacity to help support and care for people
And then to put my needs in there too @CalmingNature , @Girasole (Peer Worker)

Shaz51

It'd mean I wouldn't need to spend potentially hours or days catching up from exhaustion, and be able to do the things I like instead. I think I'd just be better able to continue to function as I need to day to day, and attend to everything else that's in my life.

Girasole (Peer Worker)

We have valid needs just like the people we support! And our wellbeing is important not just for the people we support, but inherently for ourselves

CalmingNature
(Peer Worker)

Are there some boundaries you're willing to be a bit flexible with for a loved one? Do you have any boundaries you cannot be flexible with?

Shaz51

@CalmingNature , getting my hair done every 6 weeks , night time after washing , showers dishes are done ,like some me time before making mum's evening cuppa

CalmingNature
(Peer Worker)

@Shaz51 They're some great ways to care for yourself while caring for others!

BPDSurvivor

Sorry I'm late!

CalmingNature
(Peer Worker)

Weclome @BPDSurvivor ! It's great to have you here

Girasole Said: It'd mean I wouldn't need to spend potentially hours or days catching up from exhaustion, and be able to do the things I like instead. I think I'd just be better able to continue to function as I need to day to day, and attend to everything else that's in my life". Yes Absolutely. I agree- It's going to take me a week to Recover from my current state of exhaustion @Girasole (Peer Worker)

Adge

The Hams

hi

Girasole (Peer Worker)

I have several boundaries I'm willing to be flexible with. Generally I need to be able to complete my responsibilities, like go to work, but if things are bad and someone needs me, I'm willing to use my carer's leave to take time off work. Being able to get enough sleep is also quite a firm boundary for me- but I'm willing to be flexible with even that if a situation is dire

BPDSurvivor

In terms of flexibility, I seem to be less flexible with the loved ones closer to me than the ones not so close.

Shaz51

Thank you @CalmingNature , wondered if I was doing the right thing xx
i only have myself to look after but generally unwell people need endless patience and supportiveness

CalmingNature (Peer Worker)
Girasole (Peer Worker)

Welcome @The Hams !

I think my boundaries are generally a bit more flexible for the people closest to me

**CalmingNature
(Peer Worker)**

How do you navigate making time for yourself around caring for others?

the magician

I'm not as flexible and nice to people who aren't themselves understanding

The Hams
The Hams

It's hard to find a balance I think.
I agree @the magician

BPDSurvivor.

I care for everyone else and leave myself to the end... usually i'm exhausted.

the magician

just listen

BPDSurvivor

I agree @Hams that's finding balance is challenging

the magician
**CalmingNature
(Peer Worker)**

Just listening

Do you find that there are any barriers to making time for yourself? If so, maybe we could think together about some possible solutions?

BPDSurvivor Usually, my body tells me I need to
BPDSurvivor SLOWWWW down.
BPDSurvivor Expectations of people make it hard to say NO

Girasole (Peer Worker) @BPDSurvivor yes I feel you on that - our bodies definitely tell us when we're being pushed too much and need to slow down

BPDSurvivor And if it is for work, it's even harder to say NO. So, instead, I turn off everything and not make myself available outside hours

Shaz51 Yes @BPDSurvivor I do the same , myself is always last @CalmingNature

pisces_1 (Moderator) @BPDSurvivor such a good boundary with work

the magician I live alone my issue is time for others
For me it can be helpful to understand all the other options of support available to someone (e.g. other people, services, etc.) who they could reach out to, so the pressure is not entirely on me.

Girasole (Peer Worker) Time to ourselves, and respite, is so important. We're no help to others or ourselves if we're burnt out
BPDSurvivor

BPDSurvivor @the magician... I live alone, but because I'm doing things for everyone, I don't get home until 8:30/9pm!
True @Girasole

CalmingNature (Peer Worker) **It can be really important to have support and care for yourself while you are supporting and caring for others. What support do you have around you for yourself?**

adge "I care for everyone else and leave myself to the end... usually i'm exhausted" Yes that's what I've most often done (for most of my Life) too @BPDSurvivor

the magician instead of boys nite out carers nite out

Girasole (Peer Worker) I love that, @the magician !

The Hams lol @the magician

Shaz51 Even though I might be last @CalmingNature to look after myself but will try to include me at some time

CalmingNature (Peer Worker) I'm glad you're finding some time for yourself, I just hope you're getting enough @Shaz5 I understand it can be very difficult juggle all the different responsibilities

BPDSurvivor I'm finding new hobbies such as bike riding and painting... this is for ME time
CalmingNature (Peer Worker)

@BPDSurvivor Hobbies are such a great way to have some 'me' time and really focus on yourself and what you enjoy

Girasole (Peer Worker)

Support for ourselves is really important and something that I don't think is generally talked about enough. I have a therapist who I see regularly; supportive friends and loved ones; and I'm aware that there are various support services who I can speak to ad-hoc if need be, e.g. Blue Knot, the Butterfly Foundation I'm not involved with services like Carer Gateway myself, but I have others I know who are and have found benefit from it

CalmingNature (Peer Worker)
BPDSurvivor

Much like @Girasole (Peer Worker), when caring for others, I made sure to have regular appointments with my therapist. I also have wonderful friends and family members who I could talk to when I needed - talking to people really helped me look after myself
Sounds great @CalmingNature

the magician

being independent is so important for your relationship with family/friends have to leave the nest eventually. and often that makes it better. being self reliant and proactive.

CalmingNature (Peer Worker)

Have you learned anything helpful from others' experiences here tonight that you might be able to apply in your own life? If yes, what was it that you took away? 😊

the magician

sometimes people we care about stray and can't be helped

Girasole (Peer Worker)

I genuinely love @the magician 's idea of a carers night out! Fun, connection, and respite are all valuable things

The Hams

I think lockdown has made us feel lonelier and so it's even harder too

the magician

where do you meet people in lockdown?

CalmingNature (Peer Worker) Tonight's topic could have brought up some uncomfortable feelings as we talked about our struggles to care for ourselves. Would some self-care be helpful for you after we finish? If so, what might you do? 😊

the magician ice cream and a book

Girasole (Peer Worker) I'll try my best to focus on getting a good night's sleep- something I've been struggling with lately!

CalmingNature (Peer Worker) I also plan to read @the magician ! I find it such a wonderful way to unwind

BPDSurvivor I find reading helps too!

Shaz51 Sometimes I don't seem to be getting enough @CalmingNature And sometimes I feel like I need more

Girasole (Peer Worker) What kinds of things are you reading? :)

CalmingNature (Peer Worker) I'm currently reading The Island of Sea Women by Lisa See - its very interesting and an easy read!

the magician Raymond E Feist about 6 trilogies 30 books
the magician they're my friends

BPDSurvivor Sounds good @the magician
Shaz51

Going to watch a program on the laptop
@CalmingNature

BPDSurvivor For me, I read anything. I am enjoying psych
thrillers though

**CalmingNature
(Peer Worker)**

[We'd like to invite you to complete a survey reflecting on your experience in this Peer Group Chat- we'd love to hear any feedback you may have. It will only take a few minutes to complete. Please click this link: https://sane.au1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5uUF0sHJRKQ6wyW](https://sane.au1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5uUF0sHJRKQ6wyW)

**CalmingNature
(Peer Worker)**

Here are some further resources on caring for yourself while caring for someone else you might like to have a look at: <https://www.carergateway.gov.au/help-advice/looking-after-yourself> <https://forum.carergateway.gov.au/s/>
(Carer forums) <https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/servicesandsupport/looking-after-yourself-as-a-carer>

**CalmingNature
(Peer Worker)**

[Thank you for joining, and we hope you enjoyed the discussion. If you'd like to be informed when our next Peer Group Chat will be taking place, you can sign up to our mailing list here https://www.sane.org/peer-support/peer-group-chat. You can also ask a question for our next topic, which will be talking about Developing a Growth Mindset and you can read the transcripts of all our previous topics too 😊](https://www.sane.org/peer-support/peer-group-chat)

BPDSurvivor

Wow! The mindset chat sounds soooo interesting! I would love to join that! I've looked into Carol Dweck's work on Growth Mindset

BPDSurvivor

Thank you soooo much!

Girasole (Peer Worker)

Yay @BPDSurvivor we'll look forward to seeing you at the next group!

the magician

thanks people

Girasole (Peer Worker) Thank you @the magician ! Take care everyone, thank you for a great chat tonight :)

