

## WHAT SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE FOR CARERS?

The experience of mental illness not only affects the individual but also those who care about them. Families and friends can play a vital role in supporting a person with mental illness. Many in this role do not even think of themselves as a 'carer'. They have found themselves in this role because they see it as part of their relationship with the person who is affected. They may be a parent of someone with a mental illness, or an adult caring for a partner, parent or friend. A child who looks after a family member with a mental illness, such as a parent, can also be a carer. Carers also may not necessarily live with the person they care for.

Whatever the personal relationship, caring for someone living with a mental illness can be stressful. It is essential therefore to look after yourself as well as the person you are caring for. Self-care includes looking after your own physical, mental and emotional health. Doing this can be sometimes be down to a matter of changing habits and attitudes. It need not take up a lot of time, or cost a lot of money.

### TIPS FOR LOOKING AFTER YOURSELF AS A CARER

- Remember to nurture your own mental and physical health.
- Remain physically active in ways that you enjoy (for example – walking, stretching, jogging or playing a team sport).
- Get enough sleep each night (for example – go to bed and rise at regular times).
- Stay in touch with friends and family who can encourage and support you.
- Establish a regular night out for fun (for example – seeing a movie once a week).
- Take up a new hobby or reconnect with an activity you used to enjoy (for example – cooking, reading, gardening, photography, listening to music).
- Find a local carers support group and join [SANE's online Carers Forum](#) where you can share experiences, tips, and support with others in your situation.

A range of services exist to support family members, friends, and carers of people with a mental illness. These can provide practical, financial, and emotional support through services such as respite care, training, and peer support.

### SUPPORT SERVICES FOR CARERS

## **Carers Australia**

1800 242 636

Carers Australia is the national peak body representing Australia's carers for all health conditions. It advocates on behalf of carers to influence policies and services at a national level. Services are provided by a network of State and Territory Carers Associations, including counselling, advice, and information.

## **Carers online support**

An online eight-session course from Carers Australia, providing mental health foundations for carers new to their role.

## **Mental Health Carers Australia (formerly ARAFMI National)**

1300 554 660

Mental Health Carers (formerly ARAFMI) Australia is a collective of organisations whose members have a relative or friend affected by mental illness. These organisations may have different names depending on the State and Territory where you live. Mental Health Carers Australia present the views and perspectives of carers and advocate for changes and services to improve the lives and wellbeing of people affected by mental illness, including carers and family members.

## **Mental Illness Fellowship of Australia (MIFA)**

1800 985 944

The Mental Illness Fellowship of Australia is a membership organisation, representing at the national level, the interests of its member organisations and people affected by mental illness. MIFA has member organisations operating in most States and Territories.