

**FOR YOUNG CARERS**

# Looking After Yourself



Being a young carer can be pretty demanding. It can feel like there's no room to do anything for yourself. Here's how other young carers think about ways of staying healthy.

## **1** Feeling overwhelmed sometimes is normal

'The worst is when you feel like you're the only one going through this. It's you against the world. You might feel that you have always be on top of everything. But it's allowed to be hard.' - Amy

## **2** You are still important

'We can feel like it's impossible to think about ourselves, or not to focus on the person we care for. But it's so important to make sure we do make some time to look after ourselves. Because if we're falling apart at the seams, it's so much harder to care for someone.' - Sarah

'You're a young person with hopes and dreams and aspirations, and you deserve to live a healthy, happy life. You don't need to feel guilty about every now and again being taking time to look after themselves.' - Dean

## **3** There is support out there

'Remember that there's people you can talk to. There's support you can access. And most importantly, there are other young carers out there who face this stuff too.' - Ali

## **4** Be aware of your motivations around drinking and drugs

'My friends at school drank because it's fun and it's cool. They didn't have a reason to drink, but I did. Going out and getting pissed was a really quick and easy way to get out of everything. I nearly stuffed up my whole school career. You definitely still need a release valve. But just be very mindful whether your release is healthy or not.' - Brad



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# Completing Your Studies



As a young carer, you may feel that continuing your education just isn't possible. Even if you want to, there's just too much on your plate. Here is how other young carers manage to keep going with their studies.

## 1 Use support around you

'Talking to my carer support worker helped. They lined up a meeting with the school counsellor, who was great, and helped with talking to the teachers about what I need to finish Year 12.' – Li, 19

## 2 Don't put yourself down

'Understand that if you're off your game, it's not because you're a bad student. It's because you're exhausted mentally and socially and physically because of the extra responsibilities you have at home.' – Lauren

## 3 Tuition is available

'Carers ACT arranged a tutor which was a big help and he gave me some great tips to stay on top of my work. It also gave me the opportunity to have some set time each week to do my homework with someone there to help me'. – Jack, 15

## 4 Don't be afraid to talk to your teachers

'It's okay to let them know a bit about what's going on at home. Find a moment when you can talk to them in private and just say, "Look, I'm not going to be able to do that assignment. And here's why...". It varies, but sometimes there's room to move with deadlines.' – Kara

## 5 Chunk down big assignments

'Set goals so every week you feel you've accomplished something. You could say, "This week I'll have 300 of the thousand words done". It doesn't have to be a huge commitment. Just something to keep you moving.' – Ali

  
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# Time Management



As a young carer, you'll often have a lot on your plate: looking after your family member, study, sometimes work as well. It can feel hard to fit everything in. Here are some ways other young carers manage their time.

## 1 Use tools to help you

'The biggest thing that I learned is that the calendar is one of my best friends. I'd never had to use one before I became a carer. Then once I started having to do doctors appointments, and school appointments on top of that, the load literally doubled I didn't realise how hard it is to do all that stuff in my head.

Having a calendar and mapping out what needs to happen just meant that every day wasn't chaos.' - Aidan

## 2 Believe in your ability

'As a child, I'd always assumed that paying bills was going to be this huge task. Then when Mum got sick, I realised I could do it. All these things that I'd associated with being really adult things, and I saw I could totally handle.' - Meg

## 3 Schedule time to recharge as well

'I set aside time to do my school work, but I wish I'd also just made time to do nothing. You just think, "Oh, I've got a free hour. I'll cram something else in there". An hour is a very hard thing to find throughout the day sometimes. But when I didn't schedule in free time, I just found I was tired all the time.' - Ben

## 4 Chunk big tasks into smaller parts

'When you look at being a carer, it feels like this one huge thing. But you know that everything is impossible when you look at it like that. So break it up, break it down. What's the thing that you've got to get done today?' - Rachel



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# Talking to Friends



When you're a young carer, it can be hard to work out if you should tell your friends - and if you do share, how much do you tell them?

## 1 You may not want to burden your friends

'My true friends understood and wanted to help me.' - Georgie

## 2 Choose who to trust

'I did tell two of my closest friends. And one of them I'm no longer friends with because she acted really mean about it. And then my other friend just accepted it and we're like besties.' - Anna

## 3 Don't keep it all to yourself

'As I've gotten older I've talked to my friends about my caring role, and they were all very accepting. I wish I'd done it sooner, so I had someone to talk to rather than just bottle it all up.' - Shay

## 4 You may feel embarrassed about what your friends might think

'Earlier in Mum's life, my friends had been over at my house, and had a good relationship with my mum. When she got sick, I didn't want them to see her like that. I thought that they'd look at my mum differently and I didn't want them to think less of her and me. But my friends came over one day and they were actually cool with it' - Josh

## 5 You don't need to share everything all at once

'Just take it slow. Rather than saying, "Mum's sick and I do all of the housework," be like, "This week, I'm going to help Mum do the groceries".' - Aidan

'Watch how they react. They might say, "I help Mum with the groceries as well". You might find out you have more in common with that person than you think.' - Kevin



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# Talking to Teachers



You may sometimes need support from your teachers: more time for assignments, quiet time out of class to think, or someone to help you work out a study plan.

Some teachers may understand your situation better than others. Here's how other young carers have handled talking to their teachers.

## 1 Don't be afraid to stand up for yourself

'Just be strong and stand up. If a teacher puts you down, remember that's just their opinion.'  
- Sarah

## 2 Choose what you share

'You don't want to feel singled out—almost like you've got this neon sign above your head. You can just feel that when they go past, they look at you different.'

Don't feel that you need to say everything. It's okay to just say, "I couldn't get the assignment in because Mum's in hospital". That sort of thing.' - Kara

## 3 Find an advocate or ally

'If you feel like you're not being heard, seek the support of someone you trust. If you've got a teacher who's been good, maybe they could talk to other staff and explain where you're coming from.' - Tegan

## 4 Know your rights

'It's actually illegal for teachers to discriminate against me because I'm a carer. When I was in high school, I had a teacher call me a slacker. They can't do that, but I didn't know it at the time.' - Braidon



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# Talking to Doctors



As a young carer, you'll often have to deal with doctors and nurses. They may not always understand that you play an important part in caring for your relative. Here are some ideas from other young carers to help you feel more confident, and get better outcomes.

## 1 Don't be afraid to stand up for yourself

'I've learned to be confident in what I have to say. I just told the doctor, "Look, I'm her carer. I live with her at home, and this isn't working".'

- Meg

## 2 Try to stay calm

'Try dialling down the emotions. Find a non-confrontational way to educate the doctors and nurses that doesn't get them on the wrong foot. Often half the battle is just showing that you're a mature person who can handle this, and not some whiney brat. They'll often take you more seriously if you don't come across as angry or shouting.'

- Duc

## 3 Find an advocate or ally

'Can you find someone to help talk to the doctors for you? That could be hard if it's an emergency. But if you know there's an appointment coming up, can you find someone to go with you?'

- Kat

## 4 Practice critical conversations

'You can be less emotional if you practice a conversation you know is coming up. So if there's a problem with appointments, you can say, "Well, actually, I am the one that Dad depends on to make those appointments. This is the reason why, this is how I do it and that is why it's important to include me in this conversation".'

- David



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# Financial Help



There are several government payments that you may be able to access. We'll list a few types that are most relevant to young carers, and show you where to find other payments. You may be eligible for more than one payment.

## 1 Young Carers Bursary Program

A \$3000 scholarship specifically designed for young carers to help with their education while at school. Applications close early September.  
[www.youngcarers.net.au/young-carer-bursary-program/](http://www.youngcarers.net.au/young-carer-bursary-program/)

## 2 Carer Allowance

A fortnightly payment for carers of all ages. (From Centrelink: [www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/carer-allowance](http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/carer-allowance)). You can also search all types of government payments through the Australian Government's Payment Finder.

## 3 Youth Allowance

A fortnightly payment for young people who are studying, training or looking for work. Carers and non-carers can both apply for this payment. (From Centrelink: [www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/youth-allowance](http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/youth-allowance))

## 4 Shaw 'Work & Care' Scholarships

A scholarship of up to \$5000 for carers of all ages to help them with education costs while undertaking a course to help with job prospects. Online applications are open all year round through the Carers ACT website. Sponsored by the Shaw Building Group.

## 5 Other Support

As well as financial help, you may be able to access other types of support, such as getting someone to help look after your family member while you take a break (respite care). For more information, phone Carers ACT 1800 052 222.

You can also check out the Australian Government's **Carer Gateway** website, a national online and phone service providing practical information to support all carers. Visit [www.carergateway.gov.au](http://www.carergateway.gov.au)



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