

Carers**ACT**

A Carer's Guide to Respite and Wellbeing

A guide to help support family and friend care givers
to find a balance in caring and looking after yourself



CarersACT

Acknowledgement of country

Carers ACT acknowledges the Ngunnawal people as traditional custodians of the Canberra region and recognise any other people or families with connection to the lands in our region. We acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and region.

Acknowledgement of Carers

Carers ACT would like to acknowledge all the unpaid Carers in the ACT and their commitment to their caring role. In particular, we thank all the Carers who have shared their caring journey in this Guide. For privacy reasons, the names of Carers have been changed but their stories remains the same.

Acknowledgement and contribution

We would like to thank Louise Keightley for her contribution to this Guide and Thirst Creative for the illustrations contained in this Guide.

Supported by



Accessibility

If English is not your first language or you speak a language other than English and you require the translating and interpreting services, contact the Translation and Interpretation Service (TIS National) on **131 450**.

If you require this Guide in an accessible on web format, please contact Carers ACT or visit www.carersact.org.au

Disclaimer

The content in this Guide is accurate at the time of publication and should be used as to provide information only. The content does not replace professional care or medical advice and should not be used as such.

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Welcome

At some point in our lives, every one of us will either require care or become (an unpaid) Carer. In the ACT, there are (more than) 50,000 Carers*

This Guide has been developed based on feedback from unpaid family and friend Carers to help support new or ongoing Carers to look after themselves and avoid some common pitfalls.

Often, a Carer will put the person they care for before their own needs – this might be something that happens without thinking about it. However, it is equally important for Carers to look after themselves as much as they care for another person.

The Guide includes some easy messages in Carer's own words on their learnings and what they would do differently if they were starting out again on the Carer journey.

We hope this Guide will act as a handy reference to assist you to have a regular break from your role as a Carer and something that you can incorporate as part of your daily life and beyond.

Thank you for being a Carer.

* Australian Bureau of Statistics- Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers 2018



About the Guide

Who is this Guide for?

This Guide is for unpaid care givers or someone who provides unpaid care and assistance to another person. If this is you, then you are a Carer.

Carers are family members, friends or neighbours, who provide assistance with the tasks of daily living to someone (family member, friend or neighbour) who:

- ▶ has a disability
- ▶ has a medical condition (terminal or chronic illness)
- ▶ has a mental illness, and/or
- ▶ is frail because they are ageing.

Why is this Guide important?

This Guide highlights the many unpaid Carers in our community to show them that there is support and assistance available to you – we value the important role you play in our community and want to provide a resource to help you.

Being a Carer is usually something many people in our community take on unexpectedly, without knowing they are actual 'Carers' – they do this because its family or want to help others in the community. Many Carers report they feel a sense of meaning and purpose from becoming a Carer, despite having little choice in this (source – CWB study 2022).

Caring for someone can be rewarding and present with challenges.

At times, we all need to step away and make time to take a break from what we are doing, even a short break for an hour or less, daily or longer, like a short get away. By doing this regularly and ongoing, you are taking preventative action to look after your health and wellbeing.

To take a break doesn't mean you are not coping – it means you are prioritising yourself to continue to give and be a Carer.

This Guide is for you – to give you tips on how to look after yourself.

Who developed this Guide?

Carers ACT is a non-government not for profit organisation solely representing unpaid Carers in the ACT for more than 30 years. As a trusted partner in care, we enable Carers to undertake their caring role by building capacity and capability. We offer a range of programs and services that support Carers along the care journey.

We listen to Carers where no-one else does, supporting and advocating for better outcomes and will be there during the hard times. Carers have always been and remain at the centre of everything we do. For more information on Carers ACT, please visit www.carersact.org.au or call **02 6296 9900**.

Did you know...?



Almost 2 in 5 Carers in the ACT experience loneliness.

Source - Caring for Others and Yourself – the 2021 Carer Wellbeing Survey

35%

of Carers in the ACT reported often feeling lonely

Up from 10% in 2020 (Loneliness scale)

2x

Carers in the ACT are twice as likely to report low levels of personal wellbeing as the national population.



Carers nationally continue to be significantly more likely than other Australians to have concerning low levels of wellbeing.

(55.2% compared to 25.4% of Australians)
Source - Carer Wellbeing Survey 2022



Carers in the ACT have a higher than average likelihood of reporting a fair or poor general health rating.

Source - Caring for Others and Yourself – the 2021 Carer Wellbeing Survey



Carers who had good access to support from friends and family were much less likely to have low wellbeing compared to those who had no or limited access to support from friends and family.

(Source - Carer Wellbeing Survey 2022)

Care for Carers

Looking after yourself as a Carer

As a Carer, it is important to look after yourself both physically and mentally.

Caring for someone can be a satisfying, positive and rewarding experience as well as one that comes with challenges.

Based on research and Carer feedback, sometimes caring responsibilities can be:

- ▶ **Overwhelming.** The journey can be uncertain, a waiting game, can change suddenly due to the different stages of a person's diagnosis, recovery or be ongoing.
- ▶ **Stressful.** At times you may feel sad, anxious, angry, frustrated, and resentful. These are a normal range of emotions felt by other Carers.
- ▶ **Unpredictable and out of your control,** where you may feel like you have little choice or options available.
- ▶ **Inconvenient and frustrating** to your normal ongoing lifestyle, making you juggle competing priorities.

We have heard from many Carers, that as a Carer, you:

- ▶ often put the needs of the person you care for before your own needs or dismiss your needs.
- ▶ want to be there for the person you care for 24/7, support them, and may feel guilty that you can't do more for them.
- ▶ feel you have no time or energy left to focus on yourself and your wellbeing.
- ▶ be busy doing everything for the person you care for and haven't stopped to consider your needs until now.
- ▶ cannot ask or rely on others to help you out. You feel like this is your responsibility and other people have let you down before when you have asked for help.

These responses are understandable and have also been reported by Carers just like you. However, for you, it doesn't have to feel this way now or in the future. There are some small steps you can take to make this less impactful for you as we hope you will discover in this Guide.



John's story

I felt that I couldn't leave Jess alone – she really needs me around all the time. I hated asking someone for help or if they could come over and she hated it too. She didn't want to be a burden. However, I was getting cabin fever. I have never had a strong social network.

My family noticed I wasn't myself and wanted to help. I had become withdrawn, and snappy at things that never used to bother me. I took a short break from caring (respite) for myself. How do I have a break without having a break?

Then I learnt to make taking a break part of my everyday – just little short breaks. I didn't want to be that snappy person again. It was nice to hear everyone noticing the change in my mood, especially Jess.

Stress and caring

Stress is experienced by all of us including those who have a role of caring for someone and those who do not. In fact, no one can avoid stress. But what we can control is how we act and/or react to stress or stressful situations.

Our modern lifestyle is full of ups and downs. This brings everyday stresses with it, in addition to your role as a Carer. Some stress can act as a motivator and be good for us. However, this can be dependent on what else is going on in our life at the same time.

Care giving is often a learned task and little to do with being an attentive family member or friend. It involves knowing how and what to do to support the person you are caring for, such as, preparation and knowledge of medical conditions and supporting someone's emotional needs as well as your own.

It is good to be aware of how you are coping and travelling with your stress levels at any given time of the day. Feeling stressed for long periods of time can result in physical changes in the body. This is known as 'chronic stress'. Chronic stress, if unattended or dismissed, can result in various stress related illnesses which can impact on your daily life and physical and mental health that is, being aware of how you think, act, and feel. Being isolated, unsupported and facing additional demands can all contribute to chronic stress.

Similarly, 'Carer burnout' or 'Carer stress', is a real condition that can sneak up on you without even being aware of it. Carers may feel burnt out due to giving too much, not making time for yourself and your needs and feeling overwhelmed or helpless in various situations.



Rose's story

My world changed overnight with my husband's sudden diagnosis. Next came tests, operations, and the waiting. We kept telling ourselves we will wait until we know what we are dealing with, which went on for weeks then months now it's been one year. Our life has literally been on hold.

Our family offered help, but we declined as we have always been in control and felt this as our business, even if they are family – in sickness and in health. I found what supports were available to me/us however, wanted to wait till we knew what we are dealing with.

I have now realised I/we were resistant to the help, thinking I/we could do this all on our/my own. I suppose I didn't think it would still be going for this long. Now Alan doesn't want to be alone and wants me there all the time. Before this, we both had independent lives in our retirement, where we do our different activities. Family have stopped asking to help us as I have turned them down so many times. I made a rod for my own back.

I know this isn't healthy for either of us. I am getting frustrated. We are both getting on each other's nerves. We are unnecessarily fighting more. We both need a break from each other.

I am finding it hard to reclaim part of me back as I feel like I am turning my back on him. I have to be positive for him (and me).

How to prevent stress

It is important for Carers to be aware of these real conditions and look at ways to prevent these from sneaking up on you and taking hold. This isn't a question on how you are coping – it's more about preventing these conditions from occurring in the first place.

Carers need to stay physically and mentally healthy, not only for the person you are caring for, but for yourself. No one else can do this for you.

Just like owning a car, we need to keep it regularly maintained, attend to any 'wear and tear' issues so it is available to us when we need it. It can be a costly exercise both in time and dollars if we ignore it by not servicing it regularly or turning a blind eye to it.

Since all caring situations are different, there is no one size or solution to fit everyone.

To keep at your optimum, this can be as simple as looking for what you can control – doing something you enjoy, connecting with others, being active, or focusing on yourself. By doing so, you are regulating your own natural hormones in your body, making you feel better, improving your physical and mental health. These hormones are also known as the 'happiness hormones' and comprise of:

- ▶ dopamine (gives feelings of reward)
- ▶ oxytocin (gives feelings of love)
- ▶ serotonin (acts a mood stabiliser) and
- ▶ endorphins (act as a natural regulator of pain in the body).

Taking a break from your caring responsibilities is known as 'respite' and can give you time to look after yourself, do some activities every day, and rest and recharge your energy levels.

While taking a break will depend on your personal circumstances, it is important to plan and book this in as 'your time' and acknowledge you are doing this for yourself.

Make a commitment at least daily with small breaks, weekly with a longer break or monthly to look after your physical and mental wellbeing. This will help to keep you operating at your optimum by managing daily stresses, which in turn builds your coping skills and resilience.

Resilience is like a rubber band – flexible and altering as we approach everyday life. However, when something major in life comes at us, it might be the thing that stretches you to your limit, where like a rubber band under additional pressure, it is stretched and breaks. When this happens in real life, this can bring with it other stress related physical and mental ill-health, making it difficult to bounce back to participate and maintain your normal life.

As Carers, we know you are resilient to undertake the role you are doing. To prevent any pitfalls, it is important to have the best skills available to you to keep you operating at your best both physically and mentally. Being more resilient won't stop life's challenges coming your way but it will help with your ability to face everyday challenges.

This Guide makes it easy for you to find some activities you can plan to do either each day, week or month to take a break away from your caring responsibilities. Make a commitment by planning something and scheduling this in daily just for you - think of it as your daily dose of wellbeing!

By keeping this Guide handy, you will always find something that suits you and a time that's right.

Michele's story

I felt overwhelmed by everything. I know my feelings towards Paul are not healthy and it is not his fault.

Although difficult at first, I need to have a break each day to look after my own needs.

Sometimes, I make a regular catch up with a friend or I go for short walk. This makes me a happier person to be around and a more helpful to Paul.



Taking a break from caring

As a Carer, sometimes you may find it hard to leave the person you care for, even for a short amount of time. It might be also difficult to admit this to yourself or hear from others who care about you that you need a break.

However, have you thought it might also be good for the person you care for? It might allow them to connect with others, enjoy new things, and extend their world of engagement. They might even miss you and appreciate you even more.

This may be a big change for them as well. That's why it is important to explain the process to them, take the time to find an arrangement that suits both of you and plan ahead, so everyone gets the best experience out of the break.



Clara's story

I love being in my garden by myself. Each morning I grab my morning coffee, the cat and spend 15 minutes in my garden, looking at any changes from the day before. Sometimes there is new blossom. It gives me a short break away from caring, some alone time and some connection with my best buddy, Buster, the cat. I feel like I can face the day ahead of me.

Making the best out of taking a break from caring

Taking regular breaks can give you time to focus on your needs, connect with others socially, to rest and recharge your energy levels, or do everyday activities in or out of the home.

This is action you can take, to prevent or reduce stress, fatigue, and the chance of Carer burnout or chronic stress.

Based on extensive research from around the world, the Northern Health's 5 Ways to Wellbeing (www.5waystowellbeing.com.au) introduces five simple and effective ways available to improve and maintain our wellbeing and happiness as part of our daily life.

These are:

- 1. Connect** - human beings require social connection to be psychologically healthy. Your relationships with others contribute to feelings of happiness, security, belonging and self-worth.
- 2. Being active** - can elevate your mood, increase your brain cells and muscle mass, keep you at a healthy weight, assist with improved sleep and prevent or delay the onset of many illnesses. It also helps to reduce stress and keeps your mind working well, that is, keeps us mentally well.

3. Keep learning – Learning new things can be fun, boosts your confidence and self-esteem, helps you to find meaning and purpose in life, and connects you with others. Young or old, research shows it is just as important for people of all ages and life stages to keep learning for happiness, health and wellbeing as well as preventing many ageing degenerative conditions, such as, dementia.

4. Be aware – being aware of your thoughts and feelings as they arise can increase your ability to keep calm, reduce stress, think clearly and cope better with difficult situations. Doing this can constructively change the way you feel about life and how you approach life's challenges.

5. Help others - as Carers, we know you already spend much of your time helping others. However, outside of your caring role even the smallest act, whether it is a smile, a 'thank you', or a kind word can also make a difference to the life of others and your own.

Knowing that the 5 Ways to Wellbeing works is ideal for Carers to incorporate these into your daily life. It will help you live a happier and a longer life as well as keeping you both mentally and physically strong to cope better with daily stresses, keep you flourishing and improve your resilience.

Of course, we know Carers want to feel good, function well, be optimistic, energised and self-confident – to thrive!

What is Respite and how does this relate to being a Carer?

'Respite' simply means taking a break. You may have heard 'respite' being used before because you are a Carer and/or for the person you care for.

Taking a break from caring for your health and wellbeing has been outlined in this Guide, whether it is for a couple hours break in the day, overnight, or a couple of weeks. This is also referred to as 'respite'. Basically, taking or having respite means when you are not physically with the person you care for, whether they are or you are out of the home for a period of time.

The term 'respite' and its use has changed over the years. You may often find it is referred to as a block of time where a care recipient (that is, the person being cared for) is or will be supported in an alternative accommodation setting (that is, not in the home). This is known as either short term or long-term respite.

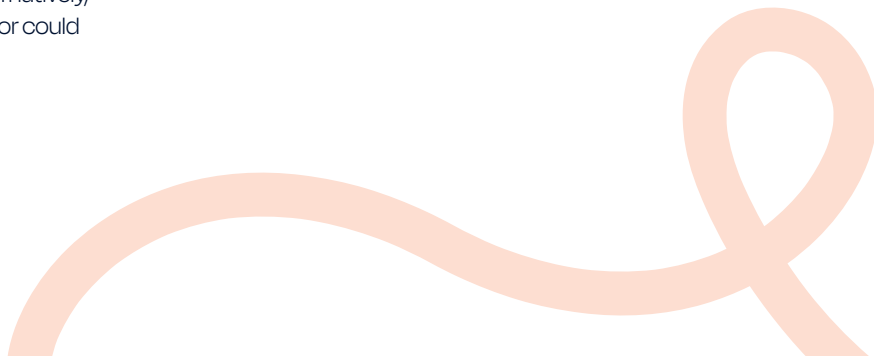
To take a physical break from caring, this might be as simply as asking a family member, friend, or neighbour to help you out for a while by looking after the person you care for. Alternatively, this can be provided by a respite service provider and/or could be a combination of both.

When respite is applied to a care relationship, whether as the Carer or the person you care for, there are some other commonly used terms and meanings for 'respite'.

These are:

- ▶ **'respite care' or 'replacement care'** - when someone else takes care of the person you care for so you can take a break.
- ▶ **'planned respite' or 'planned respite care'** - when the respite is booked in advance, either by yourself, through an organisation or directly, and is regular. This is so the Carer can plan for a regular break in advance.
- ▶ **'emergency respite'** - when a Carer is unexpectedly unwell, injured, in a crisis, needs to go to hospital or unable to care for someone. This type of respite usually occurs with very short notice.

These terms are usually referred to when caring for someone who is frail and aged, has a disability or mental health condition.



Respite comes in many forms and can include:

- ▶ **in-home**, where a paid professionally trained support worker comes to the home to take over your caring responsibilities for a specific time, so that the Carer is not required to do this. This might include personal care, such as, showering or providing social support or community transport to a medical appointment;
- ▶ **in the community**, with a paid professionally trained support worker takes the care recipient on an outing, whether as an individual or in a group setting;
- ▶ **at a cottage or centre with professionally trained workers**, where you leave the care recipient for a specified time, sometimes a couple of hours, half a day or overnight
- ▶ **in a residential care facility with professionally trained workers**, where you leave the care recipient for a specified time, say for you to go on a holiday; or
- ▶ **'flexible services'**, using equipment/aids and community transport can help alleviate the caring load giving a respite effect.

These types of respite services usually require a contribution to the costs for the care and service provided. If applicable, contributions for formal respite services can be subsidised under the various initiatives provided by the Australian Government through My Aged Care (MAC), National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) or Carer Gateway (including Emergency Respite as detailed below). These are usually dependent on a needs assessment.

Whether subsidised or not, formal respite services are usually dependent on mutual agreement between the Carer and the care recipient, availability of spaces/beds in your local area, require bookings in advance and may become costly over time if this is your only access to respite.

Elizabeth's story

I take a moment regularly to check-in throughout the day to see how I am feeling, specifically my stress levels. I plan my activities around this. If I am easily stressed, I won't make those calls where I am waiting forever on the line as I know it will only frustrate me more.

I choose a different activity that will give me some respite and joy. I will call a friend instead for a catch up.

180 ways to wellbeing

Some tips on how to get started

Getting started is always the most difficult thing to do,

so start small, say, 10-15 minutes each day for you, such as taking a short walk around the block or make a phone call. This also helps you step away from the person you care for. Any change can feel unsteady until we learn to adjust to a new routine or schedule. Make having a break part of your everyday lifestyle – not a duty nor a chore but a daily ritual. It might take a while for you to get this right, with going off track before you head in the right direction. Reflect on what you can control and plan around any likely barriers in advance. Just remember your physical and mental well-being are important. Build on your confidence and be patient with your progress.

You may like to speak to a personal coach (available free through the Carer Gateway) to help you with the above, build your confidence, motivation and plan activities for your wellbeing.

Start with something you are likely to do or enjoy doing.

Think about what activities you enjoy or people you like to be with. Ask your family and friends about some ideas, if nothing comes to mind. This might be what you enjoyed years ago and now miss doing. Note – you don't have to be good at these things nor do they need to be costly. Spend some time doing some research on how to get involved in them. Look for activities you can engage in for free or low cost, such as, local for activities in local paper, online, libraries, community and neighbourhood centres, clubs, senior citizens centres, hobby groups, etc.

Acknowledge every time you take a break and take notice on how you feel. It might be giving yourself a virtual (or physical) pat on your back to say, well done!

Make a list of all the people in your support team – people who can help you to make time for yourself and take a break. Let your family and friends know about your new routine and how you would like to schedule taking regular breaks daily, weekly and monthly. Hold a meeting with them and ask them to share your caring responsibilities to see if they can offer regular times to be available to help you out here and there and for words of encouragement to keep you on track. People also want to feel good about helping you.

Don't be afraid to ask for help and support. You don't have to do everything by yourself. It might not be easy to do at first, just take one step towards starting or asking. Set clear expectations of yourself and others. If you don't ask, you might never know. People also want to feel good about themselves by helping and caring for you.

Be realistic and know your limits in what you can do in the time you set aside for yourself (both in time and energy). Don't take too much on or overburden yourself. When you are feeling tired or stressed, make a smaller commitment to taking a break from caring, such as, a cuppa break or walk around the block or a call to a friend. Know you are still making a commitment to yourself. Remember to treat yourself with kindness and respect - If you miss one day or session, just start the next day. It is normal that things may not go to plan.

Speak to your Doctor (GP) before starting any physical activity or if you have a pre-existing health condition.

Let your Doctor know about your caring responsibilities, your health and wellbeing.

Having a plan is a great way to have some control to ensure you can take a break from caring. Plan a break/activity each day, week, month. Write it down, be specific with when you will do this, for example, at a particular time in the morning, who with and stick the plan on your fridge or somewhere you can't miss. Set a reminder in your phone. Having a plan is a great way to have some control to ensure you can take a break from caring.

Engage a buddy or a friend to help you with taking a break to do something you enjoy. Make a time and place to commit to this. They will help you to have a break.

Try not to worry about what others may think. You may feel guilty leaving the person you care for, however the break is about your ability to continue being healthy in your role as a Carer.



Did you know 15 minutes equals 1% of the day!



Aldo's story

Each day I have made a commitment to 10 deep full breaths – breathing slowly, fully and deeply. I can't believe how something so small has made a difference over a week. I feel like my head is clearer and feel mentally stronger to take on the day ahead.

Andrew's story

I hear a lot about self-care – then I realised taking some time for myself by scheduling in regular breaks from caring is actually self-care. I am making time for myself, being kinder to myself so that I can be a better Carer. It was difficult at first. Now I focus on something for me every day and reward myself for it (in a healthy way!)



Because we want you to be physically and mentally well, we have compiled a list of over 180 activities for Carers of all ages and ability to take short breaks daily or longer. There might be activities that you are not interested in at all – and that's ok – as one size doesn't fit everyone. However, use the list to get you thinking of what you may like to do or as an easy reference when you don't know what to do.

Take a look at the list below and see what you are already doing for your health and wellbeing and what you may like to do whether now or in the future. Think of some activities you can do either for:

- ▶ 5 – 10 minutes
- ▶ 20 – 30 minutes
- ▶ Up to 60 minutes
- ▶ Between an hour - 2 hours
- ▶ Longer than 2 hours.

At the back of the Guide, there is a form you can add these too (refer to page 30). Remember this list is a guide for you to choose what works for you.



Try out the online tool!

Scan this QR code and head over to our website where you can personalise this list based on how you are feeling.

180 ways to take a break for your wellbeing

1. Take some quiet moments in your day to listen to the sounds of nature and enjoy some fresh air.
2. Go for a drive somewhere you haven't been before, driving a different route.
3. Find a buddy to talk to about your favourite sport or team.
4. Go to a local performance – concert/music, comedy act, theatre, ballet, orchestra.
5. Buy something special for yourself, whether at the shops or online.
6. Nurture yourself by booking in for a massage, facial, manicure or pedicure.
7. Plan a day trip to the beach or country.
8. Catch a bus or train somewhere different.
9. Connect with your own spirituality or religion.
10. Restore a piece of furniture.
11. Connect with nature – walk in the park, look at plants/gardens and trees, watch birds/ducks at a local lake.
12. Have a conversation with someone new in the office, school or university.
13. Get out of the city and go camping.
14. Write in a blog, news item, short story, novel, a play or poetry.
15. Invite a friend/family member for a 'walk and talk'.
16. Have dinner with your family, friends or neighbours or invite everyone to a 'pot luck' meal.
17. Use technology to your advantage at a time that suits you – for example, scroll through social media, online shopping, send a GIF or YouTube clip.
18. Watch a log or campfire.
19. Plan a holiday.





20. Sing at home, take singing lessons or join a community choir, where no experience is required.
21. Reach out and connect with a friend you don't often see.
22. Spend some quality play time with pets or children. Offer to baby sit or pet mind for someone.
23. Organise something new with friends and family members.
24. Read stories to children or join in childhood chants and games.
25. Be truly present in a conversation – ask someone about their weekend and maintain eye contact, remove devices or other distractions.
26. Offer to volunteer at the local school, helping with reading/studies, mentoring children.
27. Find old photos of friends and families and share them with them and your recollections of these moments.
28. Soak in a scented bubble bath with or without candles.
29. Write a letter, card or postcard and send it by post to a friend or to yourself.
30. Visit a community centre or senior citizens centre to see what groups and activities are available locally.
31. Smile more and say 'thank you'.
32. Walk, jog, run, skip (with or without rope).
33. Have a conversation with older people by asking about their childhood memories or their career.
34. Grab a scooter or a bike and go for a ride.
35. Have a conversation with someone new in the office, school or university.
36. Dance at home or join a dance group, like bush dancing, rock n roll, belly dancing, jive, ballroom.
37. Reflect on the positives that have happened in your day. Write these down.
38. Try your hand at gardening or attend to indoor plants.

39. Have walking meetings instead of being indoors.
40. Join a social group available online such as Meet Up groups.
41. Send a quick email or text to tell someone how much you appreciate them.
42. Take the stairs instead of the lift or escalator, if possible.
43. Set a timer to get up and stretch and move morning, midday and afternoon.
44. Walk the dog or neighbour's dog.
45. Have a swim at the local pool or river.
46. Pretend you are someone else – think of what life would be like say a movie star or politician or performer.
47. Go for a walk at lunchtime.
48. Give drumming a go.
49. Try gentle stretching, yoga, Tai Chi, martial arts, Pilates group or join a gym.
50. Spend time colouring in (colour in books).
51. Grab a basketball/netball and shoot some hoops.
52. Access an online guided meditation or find a DVD at the library.
53. Enjoy a facial, pedicure, manicure, sauna, spa bath or enjoy a private float tank experience.
54. Walk the block or around the lake/pond.
55. Phone a relative or friend who needs support or company.
56. Praise those you love and hold dear.
57. Try rock climbing – outdoors or indoors or caving.
58. Catch up on your favourite show on live stream.
59. Open or hold open a door for a stranger.
60. Try a new recipe or hobby.
61. Do a jigsaw, crosswords, brush up on your trivia, try Sudoku or different puzzles, whether online or hard copy.
62. Try sewing, embroidery, knitting, or crocheting.





- 63.** Research your family history (genealogy).
- 64.** Play music or learn an instrument.
- 65.** Take lessons in another language. Check out what's available online or from the library.
- 66.** Host a quiz event or attend a local trivia event.
- 67.** Learn how to play chess.
- 68.** Try different art mediums eg paint, clay, collage, sculpture, calligraphy, mosaics, sketching, cartoons or photography.
- 69.** Learn more about other countries and their flags.
- 70.** Get off the bus one stop early or park further away.
- 71.** Go for bush walk.
- 72.** Use a dictionary for words that are new to you.
- 73.** Volunteer your skills at community organisations or religious institutions.
- 74.** Help your neighbour.
- 75.** Research something you have always wondered about. Google it.
- 76.** Have a clean out and donate some items you don't use to good will.
- 77.** Try juggling.
- 78.** Buy a cuppa for a stranger.
- 79.** Explore 'do it yourself' manuals, such as, car maintenance, shares and the stock market, gardening, home maintenance. Check out what's at your local library or online.
- 80.** Visit the local library to see what activities are available or find out all the services available to you, such as, audible books, DVDs, books, home delivery library etc.
- 81.** Take on a new role, something new to you.
- 82.** Bake a cake and give it to a neighbour or friend.
- 83.** Learn how to drive or ride a motorbike or bicycle.
- 84.** Walk or drive a new route.
- 85.** Explore short courses available through CIT.
- 86.** Learn how to ride a bike and about bike maintenance.

87. Seek out opportunities for personal or professional development courses.
88. Visit a museum or art gallery.
89. Try a new sport or take lessons such as golf, tennis or a different exercise class.
90. Ask a colleague/friend how they are and really listen to the answer.
91. Listen to a book online or a podcast.
92. Attend an open day.
93. Nominate someone for an award.
94. Go to a march or support local community action groups of your interest.
95. Learn or explore technology and what's available online on webpages apps.
96. Take notice of what you are thinking and your feelings. Not to judge them but to be more aware of them.
97. Notice the sun or rain on your skin, cloud formations and gaze at the stars at night. Watch a thunderstorm.
98. Keep a gratitude journal and write down things you are grateful for.
99. Take photos of your natural surroundings and revisit them.
100. Relax or walk in your garden or the local park. Look at changing colours of leaves, bark, tree trunks, bird life.
101. Watch a sun set or sunrise.
102. Revisit or review historical events.
103. Take 5-10 minutes to concentrate on your breathing.
104. Volunteer at an animal rescue organisation.
105. Be aware of how things feel when you touch them.
106. Read a new genre of books – something you wouldn't normally read.
107. Listen to a sermon, lecture or talk at university.
108. Learn a new card game, play cards or join a card group.
109. Notice the taste of food you eat – chewing slowly, noticing textures, flavours, how the food feels.





- 110.** Laugh out loud – try a laughter workshop or tell some jokes or try stand up.
- 111.** Go for a hike or climb a mountain to check out the view from the top.
- 112.** Go for a sail, kayak, canoe, paddle board, wind surf or hire a boat.
- 113.** Join a singing group.
- 114.** Accept a party invitation.
- 115.** Check out the local activities at your local community club.
- 116.** Go the mountains to see snow.
- 117.** Try snow skiing or water skiing.
- 118.** Make jams or preserves to keep or as presents.
- 119.** Hire a motorcycle or sports car for a day.
- 120.** Try bocce, lawn bowls or ten pin bowling.
- 121.** Play netball, basketball, squash or table tennis.
- 122.** Book in to see a counsellor or life coach.
- 123.** Play football in the yard or park.
- 124.** Go to the movies.
- 125.** Take acting or drama lessons and join a local community theatre group.
- 126.** Make some gift cards, candles or soap to keep or as presents.
- 127.** Learn more about your smart device/s.
- 128.** Try horse riding.
- 129.** Walk along the beach. Build a sandcastle.
- 130.** Give fishing a go.
- 131.** Start or join a book club.
- 132.** Take a nap or sleep in (don't set an alarm).
- 133.** Fly a kite.
- 134.** Go to raceway.
- 135.** Have media free days or limit media coverage.
- 136.** Play darts, pool or snooker.
- 137.** Buy some flowers for yourself or pick some from your garden.
- 138.** Eat a meal in silence.
- 139.** Find a relaxing scent.
- 140.** Read poetry.

141. Let out a couple of big sighs.
142. Keep a journal and write in it each day.
143. Try strength resistance training like weights or weight-lifting.
144. Take a cooking class or try a different cuisine.
145. Dress up formal for a day and go out for a cuppa.
146. Go to the races.
147. Rearrange or redecorate a room or your house.
148. Start a recipe swap group with your family and friends.
149. Go to a live sports event, even a local match.
150. Visit an antique shop and find out about periods.
151. Join a spiritual/religious group.
152. Make some arts and crafts to sell or donate to others to sell.
153. Sit in the sun with a cuppa.
154. Do some meal planning – cooking and freezing ahead. Start a food swap with family and friends.
155. Go to the zoo, amusement park or travelling circus.
156. Play board games like Monopoly, Scrabble etc.
157. Read a book, magazine or newspaper.
158. Play Frisbee.
159. Try bird watching.
160. Selling or trading items on social media.
161. Eat nutritious meals.
162. Go out for dinner.
163. Find out about growing succulents or bonsai.
164. Try scuba diving or snorkelling.
165. Check out open for inspections and auctions.
166. Collect shells from the beach.
167. Volunteer to mentor students or to be a coach or a referee at the local sports club.
168. Try clay pigeon shooting.
169. Attend a local community event, fete or farmer markets or general markets.





- 170.** Join a social walking or cycle group.
- 171.** Make fresh bread – give your arm muscle a workout and enjoy the benefits.
- 172.** Write a list of all your strengths and what inspires you.
- 173.** Take a walk and notice all the heritage buildings around you.
- 174.** Give go-kart racing a go.
- 175.** Try busking.
- 176.** Go to International Film Festivals.
- 177.** Try out Nordic Walking and join a group.
- 178.** Meander slowly around town. Do some window shopping.
- 179.** Have a pyjama day alone at home.
- 180.** Check out Carer social events, activities, and retreats at Carers ACT.

Caring and an emergency

As a Carer, it is a good idea to think about what you will do in an emergency, where you might be unable to look after the person you care for. You may become unexpectedly unwell, injured, need to go to hospital for an operation therefore, unable to look after the person you care for.

An **Emergency Care Plan** is a document where you can list all your important care information in one place, so you can have easy access to it, if you need this quickly. It should contain emergency contact details for yourself and the person you care for, relationships of emergency contacts to the person you care for, medical information, care needs and any services the person receives regularly. This information will make it easy for someone to take over caring duties from you in a hurry.

You don't have to start from scratch to do this. An Emergency Care Plan template is available through the Carer Gateway. Refer to contact details in the next section.

Remember to update your Emergency Care Plan if your information changes. Alternatively, it is a good idea to review this annually by making a note in your diary or calendar, say on your birthday or 1 January.

How to organise replacement care in an emergency

The national Carer Gateway can assist Carers to arrange emergency respite care if something unexpected occurs where you or your regular support people cannot look after the person you care for.

For more information, refer to contact details in the next section.

Where to go for help

It is also a good idea to be familiar with the formal types of respite care services that might be able to help you through Carer Gateway, My Aged Care or NDIS. Find out what is involved and how to access these when you need it.

Refer to contact details in the next section.

Useful contacts

Carers ACT

Unpaid Carers who are residents of the ACT are invited to register for free with Carers ACT to access a full range of specialised Carer services and activities.

p 02 6296 9900

w www.carersact.org.au

Australian Government Carer Gateway

Provides a range of services and supports for Carers including counselling, respite care, coaching, peer support and skills courses. These services are delivered both in person and online.

p 1800 422 737

Monday to Friday 8am to 5pm.

w www.caregateway.gov.au

My Aged Care (MAC)

www.myagedcare.gov.au

National Disability

Insurance Scheme (NDIS)

www.ndis.gov.au

Centrelink - Services Australia

www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/centrelink

healthdirect

www.healthdirect.gov.au

Health Care Consumers

www.hcca.org.au

Dementia Australia

www.dementia.org.au

Palliative Care ACT

www.pallcareact.org.au

ACT Health

www.health.act.gov.au

Council on the Ageing ACT (COTA ACT)

www.cotaact.org.au

Department of Veterans Affairs

www.dva.gov.au

Lifeline

p 13 11 14

w www.lifeline.org.au

Beyond Blue

p 1300 22 4636

w www.beyondblue.org.au

Access Mental Health Line

p 1800 629 354

References

- Unpaid Carers from the ACT
- Carers ACT
- Australian Government Carer Gateway
- Carer Wellbeing Survey 2021 and 2022
- Taking Care of You Carers NSW Australia
- Pouring from an Empty Cup: A Guide to Carer Wellbeing Carers NSW Australia
- My Aged Care
- National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)
- Northern Health (Victoria) 5 Ways to Wellbeing
- Health Direct
- Dementia Australia

A final word

Remember, as a Carer, taking care of your wellbeing doesn't mean 'me first', it means **'me too'**.

We wish you well on your wellbeing journey and thank you for being a Carer.

CarersACT



Wellbeing Activity Planner 1

Use the table below to list some activities you enjoy doing or would like to do to take a break from your caring responsibilities.

Then review your list for some ideas for you to schedule a break or when you have some free time for yourself.

Keep a note on what you enjoyed. Remember 15 minutes equals 1% of the day!

Activities I can do in					
5 minutes	10-15 minutes	20-30 minutes	45-60 minutes	1-2 hours	more than 2 hours

Wellbeing Activity Planner 2

It is helpful to plan activities to ensure you take a break. It can also be useful to use this as an activity tracker.

List activities you plan to do each day, week and month. Keep track on your achievements and what you enjoyed doing.

	Daily Activities	Weekly Activities	Monthly Activities
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Saturday			
Sunday			



Carers**ACT**