

# Carers' Counselling

## Who is a carer?

A 'carer' is someone who provides unpaid care and support to a relative or friend with a disability, mental illness, chronic condition, terminal illness, drug or alcohol dependency or who are frail.

Carers can be of any age and from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. They could be parents, partners, brothers, sisters, children or other relatives or friends.

Carers may care for a few hours a week or all day every day.

## What does a carer do?

Some carers assist with the tasks of daily living - feeding, bathing, dressing, toileting, or administering medications.

Others care for people who are quite independent but who may need support with transport or finances.

All carers generally provide some form of emotional support, with some helping to sustain some of the community's most vulnerable and isolated members.

## What are some of the impacts of caring?

**Social isolation:** Carers are more likely than the general population to have little face-to-face contact with friends or relatives outside the household, especially when caring for someone with high level care needs.

**Financial disadvantage:** Caring responsibilities can adversely affect carers' financial situations. There can be a drop in income if a carer has to give up work to become a full-time carer.

## Talking with a counsellor helps

Being a carer is a demanding role that often means extreme stress, and a wide range of emotions are experienced. Carers face many losses throughout their caring journey including changes in lifestyle, family, relationships, employment and finances. These losses can mean significant grief, which may be largely unacknowledged. Without adequate support and self-care, you can increase your risk of adverse health effects.

Talking with a professional counsellor can help. The National Carer Counsellor Program (NCCP) provides carers access to short-term counselling services, and Carers NSW coordinates

this program in New South Wales. Professional counsellors in the program are trained and sensitive to issues related to the caring role.

Counselling is about talking to someone who can help you explore and understand your caring situation and the emotions you are experiencing. Seeing a counsellor is not a sign that you are 'not coping' or 'a failure'. It is a way to help support and care for you.

Counselling can focus on areas such as:

- managing stress;
- emotional support;
- practical problem-solving techniques;
- copng skills;
- health and wellbeing;
- transition issues;
- grief and loss.

Sometimes the need to 'talk it over' is clear. At other times, you may feel confused, guilty or embarrassed

about what you need to talk about. Feelings such as anger or resentment may arise in your caring situation. These feelings are normal.

Having an independent person to talk with can help reduce confusion, guilt, resentment and anxiety, or the isolation you may be experiencing and assist you gain clarity around issues to be addressed. One of the first steps in caring for you is to make time to get some of your own needs met.

## Help is available

Centacare NENW's Carers Counselling is offered with the support of Carers NSW. Carers can access up to six sessions with a psychologist or counsellor; delivered face to face from our offices, over the phone, or via videoconference.

**To access Carers' Counselling call Carers NSW on 1800 242 636 and speak to a Carer Support Officer or call Centacare NENW on 1800 372 826**

(Reference: [www.carersnsw.org.au](http://www.carersnsw.org.au), accessed 22/08/17)

