

ARE YOU A YOUNG CARER?

"A young carer is someone aged up to 25 years old who provides unpaid care and support to family members and friends who have a disability, mental illness, chronic condition, terminal illness, an alcohol or other drug issue, or who are frail aged." YOUNG CARERS WA, 2019

HOW DO YOU BECOME A YOUNG CARER?

Young people can become carers for many different reasons. They may grow up with an older brother or sister who has a disability, or their mum or dad might have a mental illness. If someone in their family is in an accident or is in hospital for a long time, a young person might start to take on extra responsibilities.

YOU MIGHT BE A YOUNG CARER IF...

- You have a sister, brother, parent, or grandparent who has a disability or illness.
- You help them with things they need help with such as taking medication, feeding, dressing, or making sure the bills have been paid.
- You help your family in other ways, like looking after other brothers and sisters, shopping for food, doing extra washing, or preparing dinner.

HOW CAN CARING IMPACT YOU?

Caring for someone you love can be a very positive experience: helping you to develop life skills; strengthening family relationships; and making you feel proud. It can also be physically and emotionally stressful, making it difficult to maintain friendships and other relationships, attend education or employment.

HOW CAN YOU CARE FOR YOURSELF?

When you are caring for someone else, it's okay to ask for help or take a break. As a young carer, it's important to look after your own health too!

Some ways of taking care of yourself include:

SLEEP

Many young carers find it hard to get enough sleep. This could be because they are stressed, or they may be woken in the night by the person they care for.

Try these tips if you need to get more sleep:

- Go to bed at the same time every night.
- Exercise during the day.
- Get some help with your caring responsibilities, so you have time to finish homework without staying up late.
- Write down all the things you are worried about, so you don't think about them while you are trying to get to sleep.

EAT WELL

It can sometimes be difficult planning healthy meals when you have so many other responsibilities to think about, but it's really important to have a good diet.

Here are some ideas to help you eat well:

- Make sure you eat breakfast before going to school.
- Try to prepare your lunch the night before, if your home is too hectic in the mornings.
- Contact the Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centres on 1800 052 222. They may be able to help organise meals when the person you care for is in hospital or needs extra support.

TAKE A BREAK

Young carers sometimes say they feel trapped when things are hard at home. It may be because you have a lot of people coming into the house to care for your relative, or perhaps you don't have much time after school to do things with your friends.

Everyone needs a space to themselves, and young carers especially need time to clear their thoughts.

Below are some ideas to give you more time out from your caring role:

- Find something that you really love (music, a sport, photography, art) and make it a priority to do it at least once a week.
- Have a quiet place that you can go to think and gather your thoughts; it might be the beach, your local library, or a nearby park.
- If you need a complete break from your caring responsibilities, know there are respite services available.

Talk to one of our friendly staff members about the supports, resources, and respite available to young carers or alternatively, visit our website at youthfocus.com.au/resources