



Carers

Common reactions

- Feelings of guilt, distress, helplessness, fear, apprehension.
- Feeling guilty about anger, resentment towards patient's illness, your reduction in leisure time, time spent caring for patient, self-blame for Stroke.
- Tiredness, lethargy, less intimacy.
- Tension around illness and recovery and ability to care for patient adequately.
- Unable to cope with finances or household chores.
- Increased smoking, alcohol use, medications.

Strategies for coping when caring

- Continue to carry out the same activities that you did before your partner had the Stroke.
- Time-out: allocate at least 15 minutes daily to yourself.
- Respite, twice-weekly.
- Ask for help: express your needs clearly and don't expect to be able to do it all.
- Exercise.
- Eat well.
- Try some relaxation strategies.
- Break up tasks into manageable portions, establish simple routines.
- Keep up social contacts.
- Explore new social contacts (eg Carers' Group/Stroke Support Group).
- Do not be afraid to express to your partner how his/her behaviour makes you feel (but be sure to do it considerately and gently).
- Try not to give in to unreasonable demands that he/she may make when behaving in an emotional way.
- Acknowledge and address feelings, eg. Talk to a friend, support group or psychologist (speak to your GP about support available through medicare).

The three Rs of successful caring

- **Regular** time out and respite.
- **Relaxation** exercises.
- **Request** both practical and emotional help.

Simple relaxation and breathing exercises

- Stop what you are doing and find a quiet place.
- Breathe in and out slowly in a 6 second cycle. Breathe in for 3 seconds and out for 3 seconds. This will produce a breathing rate of about 10 breaths per minute. Say the word relax to yourself every time you breathe out.
- Continue breathing in this way for several minutes until you feel more relaxed.
- Now focus on releasing tension in your major muscle groups, starting from your head and working all the way down to your toes. Focus on each muscle group and release any built-up tension.

PLEASE TURN OVER



Being a carer



Carer's tips

- ☐ **Consider all your options - there are many services available;**
- ☐ **Appreciate your family member for who they are;**
- ☐ **Re-establish your personal contacts and networks;**
- ☐ **Enable other family members to become involved & responsible for the Stroke person;**
- ☐ **Get assistance before reaching breaking point;**
- ☐ **Initiate new interests, pursuits and hobbies;**
- ☐ **Validate each other's feelings - be honest but kind;**
- ☐ **Embrace change and try to be flexible;**
- ☐ **Realistic expectations of yourself and your situation are important;**
- ☐ **Sex can remain an important source of enjoyment in a relationship.**

- ◆ Be patient - it may take some time to come to terms with changed circumstances.
- ◆ Get outside assistance, when necessary - talk to people about your situation.
- ◆ Carers should look after themselves - take breaks to do things you enjoy.
- ◆ Acknowledge and discuss problems - do not pretend that everything is all right.
- ◆ Decisions may affect other family members. Involve them when appropriate.

Carer Gateway's telephone counselling can assist and link you to your local Carer's support group.

Contact 1800 422 737

or

The Stroke Recovery Association's telephone counselling can assist and link you to your local Stroke support group.

Contact 1300 650 594

Being a carer