

Chapter 2 intro

1.1 Chapter 2

1.2 introduction

Hello, and welcome again to our programme on coping skills for families and carers. This is chapter 2: looking after yourself. As we will see, Caring for yourself is one of the most important things you can do, but it is also one of the things we forget most often. So go on, click on the NEXT button to start the chapter.

1.3 Look after yourself

If you live with someone with dementia, this is in itself a life changing experience for you.

Each day can bring new demands, new highs and new lows.

It is really important to look after yourself from the beginning. Click on the next button to find out what we mean by self care.

1.4 What do we call self-care

So what do we call self-care?

Self-care is about actions and also attitudes that will help you to look after yourself, and maintain your own well-being.

There are many little things you can do to look after yourself.

- You can do some form of physical exercise,
- You can keep an active social life, keep in touch with people, go out with friends once a week, organize a family get-together every month.
- You can look after your emotional needs - if you like to write, you can keep a journal, or talk to close friends or family members, or to a counsellor.
- You can also look for support - you could build a support network by attending Alzheimer cafes, or call a helpline, or join social groups suitable for both of you.
- Do look after your health - visit your GP< keep your immune system up, eat a healthy balanced diet
- Try to manage your stress - it can help to have schedules and a routine, and you can also try to reduce your stress by relaxation, with music, television, meditation.

1.5 Carers on self-care

Looking after yourself is in fact a vital part of living well with dementia in your family. Click on the video to hear other carers reflect on self-care.

1.6 The caring role (carers)

Often, in order to recognize the need to look after yourself, you need to accept that you are a carer.

When you start your journey with dementia, you mightn't see yourself as a carer - this can happen gradually, or it can happen unexpectedly. Click on the video to see how other carers felt when they found out that their husband, their wife, their sister, had dementia.

1.7 The caring role (professionals)

If you accept that you have this new role, it might make it easier to put into perspective the work you do every day, In this video, a professional talks about the benefits of identifying yourself as a carer. Click on the video to hear more.

1.8 Support groups

As you identify with this new caring role, new solutions might appear. It can open up networks with organizations like the Carers Association, Alzheimer Society of Ireland, Alzheimer cafes, HSE support groups, Genio support groups. Maybe you hadn't thought of these before, but they can offer lifelines to carers. You will find links and telephone numbers in the resources section underneath this lesson.

Within these networks, you can find support with people who experience the same reality as you. You can exchange ideas about supports and services, whether they be financial, medical, social, educational, or even others you mightn't have thought of. Sharing information and ideas with people in the same situation can really have a positive impact.

1.9 Networks of carers

Among other carers, you can feel less isolated, you can feel heard and validated. It can be easier to solve problems, and even to prepare for what's ahead when you talk with others, and when you hear how they have navigated their own journeys of care. In time, you will develop of social network of people with similar experiences, who will understand your situation, and will help you to maintain your own sense of wellbeing.

Of course, these are very personal choices. Some people prefer not to see themselves as carers. and if that is your preference, it is a very valid choice. But not matter what title you choose, it will be extremely important to look after yourself.

1.10 Importance of self-care

It's easy to feel guilty about looking after yourself. You might feel that you are doing something wrong, or that you should be doing something else in your free time, something more useful. Sometimes, a passing remark from family or friends can trigger that guilt. They might have said "I don't know how you can sleep" or "I don't know how you can go and get your hair done, when Ted is like that". It's important not to give in to those feelings of guilt. There are many reasons why it's so important to look after yourself. It's only if you help yourself that you can help somebody else.

Looking after yourself is not a selfish act

When your needs are taken care of, the person you care for will benefit too

If you practice self-care, it will help you deal with stressful situations a lot better and avoid burn out.

1.11 Self-care in this chapter

Please stay open-minded about looking after yourself, and try and find the techniques that suit you and your situations.

I am a carer too, and I have found some ways of looking after myself. I try to eat a healthy diet, and also to practice meditation to help me to relax and focus. In this chapter, I'll show you how

to find time in your busy schedule to look after yourself. And you might even try to practice some meditation, just like me.

1.12 For more information

A teal-colored rectangular box containing the Elevator logo at the top left. The text inside the box reads: "Coping Skills for Families and Carers" in yellow, "You have finished: Introduction in Chapter 2: Looking after yourself." in white, "You can now go to Skill 1: Scheduling" in yellow, and "for more information, go to Dementia Elevator" in white with "Dementia Elevator" underlined.

 elevator Building Dementia Skills Capacity

Coping Skills for Families and Carers

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in Chapter 2: Looking after yourself.**

**You can now go to
Skill 1: Scheduling**

for more information, go to
Dementia Elevator