



COPING WITH CARING

SESSION 1

INTRODUCTION

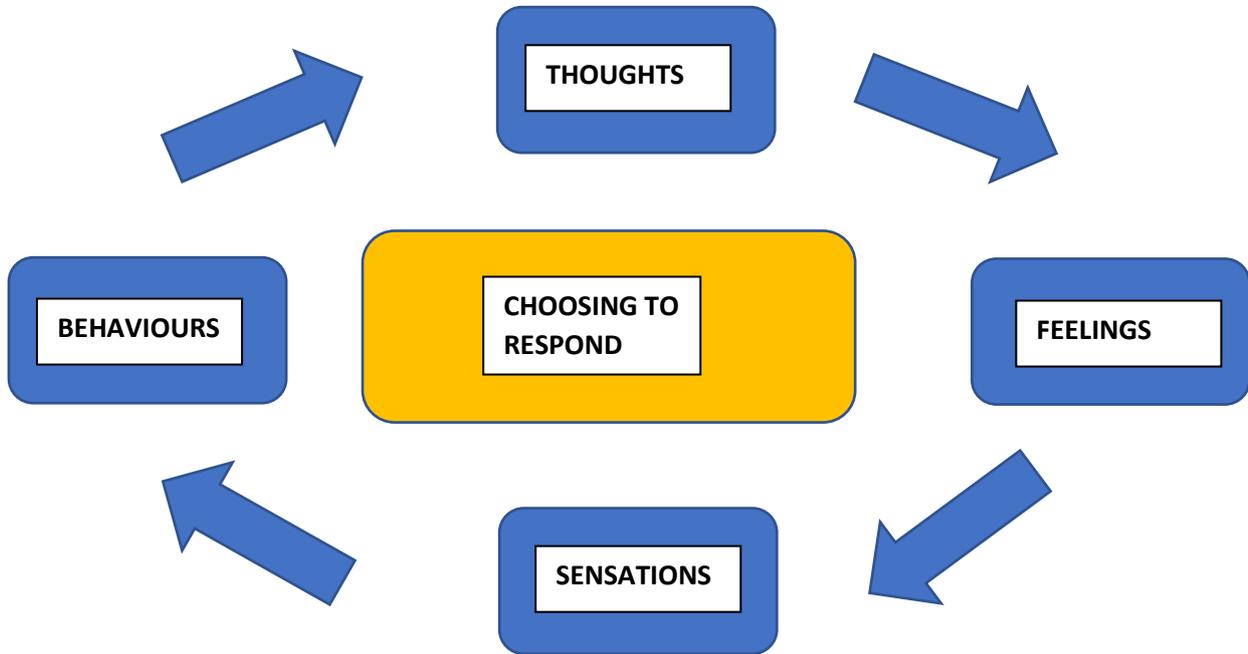
Being a carer is difficult for many people but it's just as important to take care of yourself as well as the person you care for. It may be particularly difficult if the cared for person is unable to go out or if you do not have any support to have time to yourself.

We all react in different ways to challenging events, situations and changes to our circumstances. While some people may enjoy feeling needed, other people may feel overwhelmed by the demands on their time and the emotions they may be feeling – or you may be a combination of both. You may have had to give up work and be worried and anxious about your finances or be missing your friends and being able to do things that you can't now do. Whatever your reaction is to the situation, just remember there is no right or wrong way to feel and whatever you are feeling is OK.

Any situation that we find ourselves in we will have thoughts about that situation. Your thoughts may be “what if I have to give up work” “how will I pay my bills?” “why am I having to do this?” “what if I can't cope”. Thoughts like these will trigger emotions and feelings which may be fear, anxiety, worry or frustration.

Our minds and bodies are very closely connected and when we experience an emotion, our body will respond with sensations like heart racing, feeling sick, headaches. When we don't feel good on the inside, our natural reaction is to look for something on the outside to help us feel better. Many of us will reach for things like eating more, drinking alcohol, smoking more, sleeping. However, if we can notice how we are thinking, feeling and what our bodily sensations are, we can choose to respond in a different way by carrying out a more healthy behaviour such as healthier eating, exercising, speaking to a friend, meditation or anything else that we enjoy.

You may already be responding to your situation by keeping yourself well and choosing healthy behaviours but from this workbook and the audio recordings that accompany it there may be additional ways you can increase your levels of wellbeing.



The tips and advice in this series are activities you can do that can help you make choices that can increase your levels of wellbeing, improve your mental health and build resilience so that you are more likely to cope with the challenges of being a carer.

TIP: We are all different, all of our circumstances are different, we have different levels of wellbeing and all enjoy different things. It useful to keep that in mind when working through these sessions. You may be reassured that you are already doing as much as you can to keep well but you may also find one or two things that you can start bringing into your life.



Research has shown that there are 5 main ways of keeping ourselves well which are:

5 ways to wellbeing



This workbook and the audio sessions will help you to consider how satisfied you are with your levels of engaging with the 5 ways to wellbeing but before we get into that, there are some additional ways of keeping well which are helpful to think about too



ROUTINE



SLEEP



NUTRITION



HYDRATION

WATER

The infographic shows a man in a blue suit drinking from a water bottle. Lines connect various body parts to descriptive text about the benefits of water.

- COMPOSES 75% OF YOUR BRAIN
- REGULATES YOUR BODY TEMPERATURE
- MAKES UP 83% OF YOUR BLOOD
- REMOVES WASTE
- COMPOSES 22% OF YOUR BONES
- CUSHIONS YOUR JOINTS
- HELPS CARRY NUTRIENTS AND OXYGEN TO YOUR CELLS
- MOISTENS OXYGEN FOR BREATHING
- HELPS CONVERT FOOD TO ENERGY
- PROTECTS AND CUSHIONS YOUR VITAL ORGANS
- HELPS YOUR BODY ABSORB NUTRIENTS
- MAKES UP 75% OF YOUR MUSCLES



Routine

Routine can be an anchor. No matter what's going on in our day, knowing that we will be having our evening meal around 6 pm, and going to bed around 10 pm, can be a real comfort. Being a carer can bring a lot of unpredictability to our lives and the certainty of our routine can help us to manage the uncertainty that life can throw up. Coping with unpredictable periods of time can feel more doable when we have a little structure in place to look towards.

REDUCING STRESS

Having a daily routine can help to reduce our stress levels. Trying to remember things can be really stressful and can fill our brains up with everything on our 'to do' list; which can be incredibly overwhelming. When we have a routine, a lot of the things we do day-to-day slot in, and we don't have to think about them anymore. For example, when we're well we don't have to remember to clean our teeth, because we know from habit that teeth-cleaning comes after breakfast every day. Routine can take the guesswork and uncertainty out of bits of our day, which can allow us to feel more in control and less stressed.

DAILY HABITS

Having a routine can help us to cultivate positive daily habits and to prioritise self-care. Organising our time gives us the opportunity to build in blocks of time for things that are important to us. This can allow us to build in daily habits that help us with our mental health. It could include things like time to relax, or a regular bedtime. When they're part of our routine, it can make it easier to keep up with them because we have the time to do them and they become our 'new normal'.

BUILD IN THE IMPORTANT THINGS

Creating a routine allows us to build in time for the important things. This includes time to rest, relax, and have fun. It's not perfect – there are always going to be days when something overruns, a job takes three times as long as we expect it to take, or someone pops in unexpectedly. But structuring our time to include some downtime increases the likelihood that we'll manage to have that time most days. We will all value different things – for some of us it might be having a bubble bath, others might want some time each day to talk to a friend while some of us might enjoy sitting and reading for a little while. For many it could be something else entirely, but that's why our daily routines are individual to us.