

Australian version

iSupport For Dementia

Training and support manual
for carers of people with dementia



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iSupport for dementia. Training and support manual for carers of people with dementia

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The World Health Organization (WHO) developed iSupport for Dementia, a comprehensive online dementia education and skill training programme for informal carers of people living with dementia [1]. This programme has been adapted into the Australian social context [2]. Flinders University funded the research activities leading to the current version of Australian iSupport for Dementia. The research team members who contributed to the adaptation of the WHO iSupport for Dementia programme and to the new learning module in the programme entitled 'My engagement in consumer directed care' are:

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References

1. World Health Organization; (2019). iSupport for dementia. Training and support manual for carers of people with dementia. Geneva: World Health Organization. Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.
2. Xiao, L. D., McKechnie, S., Jeffers, L., De Bellis, A., Beattie, E., Low, L. F., per, B., Messent, P., & Pot, A. M. (2021). Stakeholders' perspectives on adapting the World Health Organization iSupport for Dementia in Australia. *Dementia (London, England)*, 20(5), 1536-1552.

MODULE

3

CARING FOR MYSELF

Unit 1. Reducing stress in everyday life

Unit 2. Making time for pleasant activities

Unit 3. Thinking differently

Unit 1. Reducing stress in everyday life

Why is this Unit important?

It is important to take care of yourself while caring for another person. This Unit will help you to keep providing care.

How will this Unit help me?

This Unit helps to reduce stress and renew your energy with exercises that do not take much time.

What will I learn?

1. The importance of relaxing.
2. Different ways to relax:
 - basic breathing;
 - mindful breathing;
 - neck movements;
 - number counting;
 - imagery;
 - total stretching;
 - muscle relaxation.
3. Relaxing at any time and any place.



1. The importance of relaxing

Let's look at an example

Diana: no time, no energy

Diana takes care of her husband Dan who has dementia. She feels increasingly tense.

A friend advises her to try to relax and not ask too much of herself. Diana tells her friend that she does not have the time or energy to relax. Her friend explains that there are ways to relax that do not take much time, and that relaxing might give Diana renewed energy that could help her get tasks done more easily.

Diana succeeds in relaxing

Diana decides to follow her friend's advice and tries the breathing exercise her friend showed her.

When Diana sees her friend again she says: "Thank you for the good advice. Although I still have a lot to do, I feel less tense." Diana decides to do the breathing exercise every time she is feeling tense.

Reminder



Relaxation:

- makes you feel less tense;
- might give you renewed energy;
- may make it easier to get tasks done; and
- does not have to take much time.

2. Different ways to relax

There are different ways you can relax. Try and see which one(s) suit you best.

Before you try an exercise ask yourself: “How tense am I feeling”? After the exercise, ask yourself again. This might help you understand whether this type of relaxation helps you feel less tense.

In this Unit you will find seven relaxation exercises. The first three exercises will take only a few minutes (i.e. 5 minutes max.). The other exercises will take a little longer (i.e. 10-15 minutes max.).

Use the scale below of 1-10 and tick what number describes how tense you are feeling now, 1 is very small amount of tension and 10 is very high amount of tension.



1. Relaxation activity - Basic breathing



Focusing on your breathing is relaxing. By doing a breathing exercise you could reduce tension.

This exercise will take: less than 5 minutes.

Caution: if you experience difficulty breathing, this exercise might not be the best option for you.

This is how you do it:

- When sitting down, sit up straight in your chair with your back against the back of your chair.
- When standing, stand up straight.
- Put both of your feet flat on the surface.
- Focus on your breathing.
- Keep breathing like you are used to.
- Try to feel how you breathe. Put your hand on your stomach to feel how you inhale and exhale.
- Exhale from your mouth and pull in your stomach as much as possible.
- Follow your breathing in this manner a couple of breaths and then stop the exercise.

2. Relaxation activity - Mindful breathing



This exercise will help you feel calm and reduces stress. You will breathe with your stomach according to a rhythm.

This exercise will take: 5 minutes.

This is how you do it:

- Sit straight in a chair and make sure your face and shoulders are relaxed.
- Bring your hands to your stomach and breathe into it.
- Breathe in for 4 counts and out for 8 counts, at a comfortable pace.
- Your stomach should expand with each inhale and contract with each exhale.
- Return to your normal breathing and spend one minute just observing yourself breathing and noticing how you feel.
- Practice listening to your own thoughts without negative judgement.
- If your mind wanders, refocus on breathing and meditation.

3. Relaxation activity - Neck movements



With this exercise you will feel less tension in your neck. It will also increase the blood flow to your brain.

This exercise will take: 5 minutes.

This is how you do it:

- Make sure to move slowly and with attention.
- Bend your neck forward and backward.
- Inhale while you lift your head up and back. Exhale while you drop your chin to your chest.
- Rotate your chin from side to side.
- Inhale when your chin is in the centre. Exhale when you look to the side.
- Drop your ear towards your shoulder.
- Inhale when you are in the centre. Exhale when you drop your ear to your shoulder.
- Repeat 5 times.

4. Relaxation activity - Number counting



You can relax by focusing on your breathing and counting back from 20 to 1.

This exercise will take: 5 minutes.

This is how you do it:

- Sit or lie down comfortably in a quiet place.
- Breathe slowly.
- With each breath, take at least 3 seconds to breathe in and 6 seconds to breathe out.
- Focus on your breathing and your lower stomach when you breathe until you feel calm and peaceful inside your heart and mind.
- Say the word 'relax' whenever you breathe out.
- Tell yourself that you will start counting down from 20 to 1.
- Tell yourself that you will double your level of relaxation for each and every count, and will be totally relaxed when you reach 1.
- Start counting down from 20 to 1 slowly. Say the word 'relax' whenever you count (that is, take a deep breath, say '20', breathe out slowly and say 'relax', take a deep breath, count '19', breathe out slowly and say 'relax', and so on).
- Now repeat this exercise but with your eyes closed.

5. Relaxation activity - Imagery



You can relax by imagining you are in a place or surrounded by people and things you like.

This exercise will take: 5 minutes.

Before completing this exercise, take a look at the helpful guidelines below.

- Only imagine places, people and things you like.
- Imagine what you can hear, feel, smell, and/or taste if you were in that place.
- Try to think of very specific details of the place, thing or person. For example, how does the surface of the thing feel and how does it smell?

Now try to relax while imagining that you are in a place or with the people or things that you like.

This is how you do it:

- Sit or lie down comfortably in a quiet place.
- Breathe slowly.
- With every breath, take at least three seconds to breathe in and at least six seconds to breathe out.
- Focus on your breathing and your lower stomach when you breathe until you feel peaceful inside.
- Imagine you are in a place or surrounded by things or people you like.
- Now do this exercise again but close your eyes.

6. Relaxation activity - Muscle relaxation



This exercise is particularly helpful when your muscles feel tense. This exercise will help you relax by tensing and relaxing your muscles.

This exercise will take: 10-15 minutes

Caution: if you have any injuries or any other physical limitations, this may not be the best exercise for you. Try one of the other exercises.

Below are some general instructions for you to keep in mind.

- When you are ready to begin, tighten the muscle group described. Make sure that you can feel the tension, but no pain. Keep the muscle tensed for approximately 5 seconds.
- Relax the muscles and keep it relaxed for approximately 10 seconds. It may be helpful to say 'relax' as you relax the muscle.
- When you have finished the muscle relaxation, remain seated for a few moments allowing yourself to become alert.

This is how you do it:

- **Right hand and forearm:** make a fist with your right hand. Hold for 5 seconds and then relax for 10 seconds. Don't forget to breathe. It might be helpful to inhale while tensing your muscles and exhale while relaxing your muscles. Do the same for your left hand and forearm.
- **Right upper arm:** bring your right forearm up to your shoulder to 'make a muscle'. Hold for 5 seconds and then relax for 10 seconds. Do the same for your left upper arm.
- **Forehead:** raise your eyebrows as high as they will go, as though you were surprised by something. Hold for 5 seconds and then relax for 10 seconds.
- **Eyes and cheeks:** squeeze your eyes closed. Hold for 5 seconds and then relax for 10 seconds.
- **Mouth and jaw:** open your mouth as wide as you can, as if you are yawning. Hold for 5 seconds and then relax for 10 seconds.

Please continue the exercise on the following page.

6. Relaxation activity - Muscle relaxation (continued)



- **Neck:** be careful as you tense these muscles. Face forward and then pull your head back slowly, as though you are looking up to the ceiling. Hold for 5 seconds and then relax for 10 seconds.
- **Shoulders:** tense the muscles in your shoulders as you bring them up towards your ears. Hold for 5 seconds and then relax for 10 seconds.
- **Shoulder blades/Back:** push your shoulder blades back, trying to almost touch them together, so that your chest is pushed forward. Hold for 5 seconds and then relax for 10 seconds.
- **Chest and stomach:** breathe in deeply, filling up your lungs and chest with air. Hold for 5 seconds and then relax for 10 seconds.
- **Hips and buttocks:** squeeze the muscles in your buttocks. Hold for 5 seconds and then relax for 10 seconds.
- **Right upper leg:** tighten your right thigh. Hold for 5 seconds and then relax for 10 seconds. Repeat for your left upper leg.
- **Right lower leg:** do this slowly and carefully to avoid cramps. Pull your toes towards you to stretch the calf muscle. Hold for 5 seconds and then relax for 10 seconds. Repeat for your left lower leg.
- **Right foot:** curl your toes downwards. Hold for 5 seconds and then relax for 10 seconds. Repeat for your left foot.

7. Relaxation activity - Total stretching



Stretching your muscles can help to decrease tension. Stretching exercises are very convenient since you can do them anywhere and anytime.

This exercise will take: 10 minutes.

This is how you do it:

- Stand up, or do this exercise in your chair.
- Take a deep breath, all the way down to the bottom of your stomach, and slowly let it out.
- As you exhale, feel the tension drain from your body.
- Take one more breath and hold it for a moment... and let it out slowly.
- With each breath you are becoming more and more relaxed.
- Now, gently reach your arms out to the sides as though you were trying to touch the walls.
- Relax your shoulders and stretch yourself a little.
- Gently reach your arms out in front of you.
- Feel the muscles in your back and shoulders loosen up.
- Stretch out in front a little further.
- And now reach up as high as you can.
- Push up your arms towards the sky, as if you were trying to reach the sun.
- Again, reach your arms out to the sides as though you were trying to touch the walls, as though you were trying to push them outwards.
- Reach out in front of you.
- Feel your muscles in your back and shoulders become looser and less tense.
- Reach towards the sky one more time.

Please continue the exercise on the following page.

7. Relaxation activity - Total stretching (continued)



- Reach as high as you can.
- Try to touch the sun.
- Lower your arms to your sides.
- Now, roll your shoulders back.
- Feel the tension drain from your body.
- Roll your shoulders back again. One more time roll your shoulders.
- Now roll them forward. Forward again. One more time forward.
- Now shrug your shoulders, lifting them up and then pushing them down. Shrug your shoulders again. Shrug them one more time.
- Now another deep and refreshing breath and exhale all of the tension in your body.
- Take one more breath...and exhale letting go of any remaining tension.



3. Relaxing at any time and any place

You can take some time to relax at any time of the day and in any place.

Let's look at an example

Diana: relaxing while waiting in line

Diana often feels tense when there is a long line in the store, as she is aware she still has many other things to do. She decides to do the breathing exercise while waiting in line.

Afterwards, she feels less tense.

You can also plan a specific time to relax, for example every day after lunch. You can choose what suits you best. If necessary, you can use a reminder to make sure that you do not forget to take some time to relax.

Keep in Mind



- You can take some time to relax anywhere and at any time of the day.
- Set a goal: try to do a relaxation exercise at least once a day.
- You can plan a specific time to relax every day (if necessary, use a reminder).
- You will benefit from having renewed energy and a better mood after doing the relaxation exercises.
- Even a brief exercise can make a difference!
- You will also be able to reduce feelings of tension and continue caring for your family member or acquaintance over the long term.

Was this helpful for you?

If not, there might be different reasons why relaxation was not helpful to you:

- Perhaps you could not focus on relaxing.
- Try again at another time!
- Maybe you like an exercise, but you need some more practice to really benefit from it. Try to do this exercise regularly.
- The exercise you chose may not have suited you. Try a different exercise!
- The exercise you chose was too short.
- Try this exercise again or do another one!

If the exercises are still not helping you after these tips, try to do an activity you enjoy. Have a look at **Unit 2. Making time for pleasant activities** in this module to find out which activities you may enjoy.



You finished this Unit, well done!

Unit 2. Making time for pleasant activities

Making time for pleasant activities

Why is this unit important?

It is important to take care of yourself while caring for another person. This unit will help you to keep providing care.

How will this unit help me?

This unit will help you to take time for yourself and do pleasant activities to relax.

What will I learn?

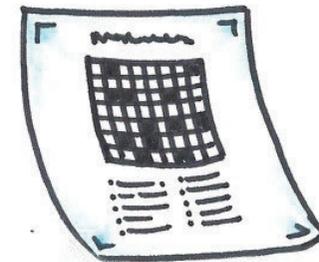
- The importance of pleasant activities
- What prevents you from doing pleasant activities
- How to make pleasant activities achievable
- Suggestions for doing pleasant activities alone or together.

The importance of pleasant activities

Pleasant activities are important because caregiving can last a long time and doing pleasant activities can help you to relax and continue caring.

Pleasant activities can be small things such as going for a walk or talking to a friend.

This may not always be easy, because providing care can be time-consuming and someone might have to take over the care for the person while you are not there.



The importance of pleasant activities

Let's see how Amy, Joe and Jim experience caregiving and the importance of planning pleasant activities.

Amy

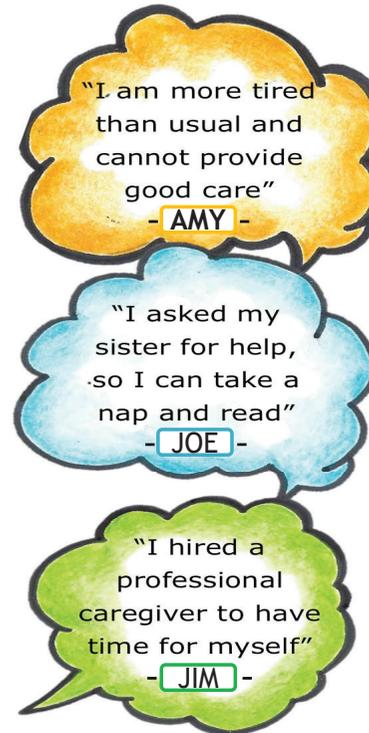
Amy takes care of her mother who is living with dementia. She dedicates most of her time to caregiving and rarely takes time for herself. She does not engage in any pleasant activities. Amy notices that recently she is more tired than usual and feels that she is not able to care for her mother as she did before.

Joe

Joe takes care of his brother who is living with dementia. Joe does not get a lot of sleep and rarely has time for afternoon naps. He recently started asking his sister to come by and help with caregiving so he can take a nap and read a magazine each afternoon.

Jim

Jim takes care of his wife who is living with dementia. Recently, he has hired a professional carer who stops by three times a week to help him care for his wife. When the professional carer is there, Jim reads the newspaper or goes for a walk.



Keep in Mind



- If you are not able to make time for yourself, you can get very tired or stressed which may make you less able to care for the person living with dementia.
- You can ask family and friends to help care for the person, so you can take some time for yourself.
- If it is affordable, you could hire a professional carer to help you care for the person so you can take some time for yourself.
- Find out if you are eligible for Government subsidised aged care services at home. See the My Aged Care website for information about help at home services or phone them for information on 1800 200 422 Mon-Fri 8am - 8pm sat 10am - 2pm.



Which pleasant activities would you like to do?

Once you have some time for yourself it can be hard to think of the things you would like to do. There are many possibilities and even in a short amount of time, you can still do an activity you like.

In this exercise you will make a list of the pleasant activities you would like to do. Pick at least two activities you would like to do more often (if your favourite activity is not listed below, use the 'other' button at the bottom of the list and add your own activity).

Activity



- | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Do a crossword puzzle | <input type="checkbox"/> Take a nap |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Watch TV | <input type="checkbox"/> Go shopping |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Visit friends or family | <input type="checkbox"/> Take a walk |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cook | <input type="checkbox"/> Exercise |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Listen to music | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Do crafts | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Read | _____ |

Let's look at your pleasant activities below:

Activity Answer:



- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Do a crossword puzzle | <input type="checkbox"/> Take a nap |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Watch TV | <input type="checkbox"/> Go shopping |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Visit friends or family | <input type="checkbox"/> Take a walk |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cook | <input type="checkbox"/> Exercise |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Listen to music | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Do crafts | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Read | _____ |

Are you aware of the pleasant activities you like to do?

And do you know which activities you want to do more often?

What prevents you from doing pleasant activities?

Providing care becomes increasingly more difficult if you do not take time for yourself every now and then. Let's go back to Amy's example.

Amy dedicates most of her time to caring for her mother who has dementia. She does not receive any help and is tired all the time. She is struggling to care for her mother and has stopped doing the things she likes because she feels she does not have enough time.

Eventually, Amy is so tired she decides to ask for help from her friend. She is now able to make some time for herself and undertake some pleasant activities. Amy feels more energised after the pleasant activities and feels she is better able to handle the care for her mother as a result.



Other reasons you may feel unable to do pleasant activities

Not having time was the reason that Amy did not feel she could do any pleasant activities.

However, there are several other reasons.

Do you recognise any of the following? Click on one of them and drop them in the box for advice on how to deal with them.

Activity



- Guilt:** You might feel guilty because you will feel you are leaving the person you care for.
- No energy:** You might have less energy because caregiving can be tiring.
- No money:** You might think you have to spend lots of money to do something pleasurable.
- Not in the mood:** You might not feel like doing pleasant activities.
- Physical limitations:** You might think that if you have physical limitations, you are not able to do a pleasant activity.
- No time:** You might feel that you are too busy and not able to find any spare time.

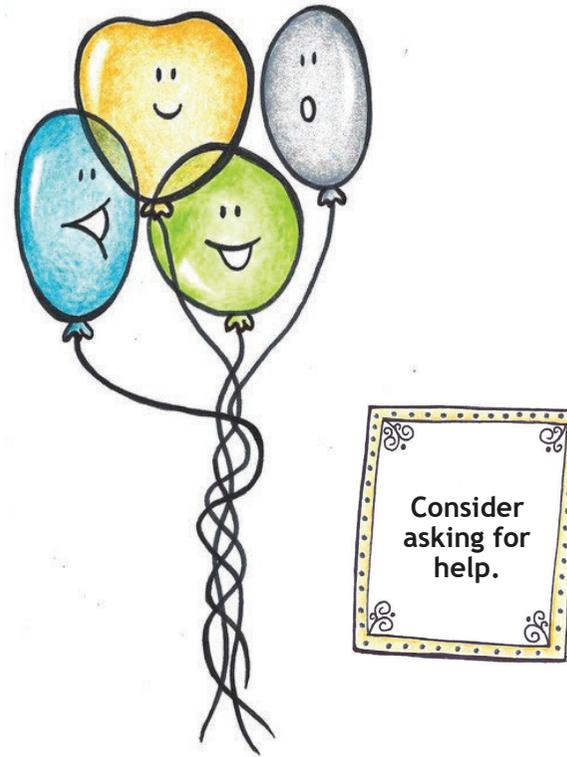
Activity Feedback



- **Guilt:** You might feel guilty because you will feel you are leaving the person you care for. You need time to do things you like, to relax and recharge so you can provide adequate care for them. Being a good carer means taking care of yourself as well.
- **No energy:** You might have less energy because caregiving can be tiring. Although it is hard to imagine, it is likely that you will feel more energised after doing something you like.
- **No money:** You might think you have to spend lots of money to do something pleasurable. Pleasant activities do not have to be costly. You can keep the activities as simple as you want them to be. For example, things like meeting a friend for a cup of tea or going for a walk by yourself do not cost money.
- **Not in the mood:** You might not feel like doing pleasant activities. Although it is hard to imagine, it is likely that your mood will be better after doing something you like. On the other hand, not doing pleasant activities will likely worsen your mood.
- **Physical limitations:** You might think that if you have physical limitations, you are not able to do a pleasant activity. If you have physical limitations, think of activities that you can do despite your limitations. There are many possibilities, such as reading, playing a game or talking to a friend.
- **No time:** You might feel that you are too busy and not able to find any spare time. It is really important that you try to make some time during the day or in the evening to do something you enjoy. If you have little time, there are some pleasant activities that do not take up a lot of time and which you can fit in around your day.

Suggestions for doing pleasant activities

- Consider asking someone to help you with some of your day-to-day tasks.
- Consider the impact of not doing certain tasks at that moment. For example, what is the impact of not cleaning the house every day? You may realise you can be more flexible and have more time as a result.
- Try to do one activity at a time and finish the things you have started as much as possible. If you leave something unfinished, it may make you feel dissatisfied. You may not be able to focus entirely on your next activity. You could feel more energised if you complete an activity before taking on another.
- Think about ways to better manage your time. Consider using an agenda or calendar. Talk to someone about how you might be able to manage your time better. Seeking another opinion or suggestions may be helpful.



Making pleasant activities achievable

Activity 					
<p>Now rate the achievability of doing the pleasant activities you chose. Read every activity and consider whether the activity is:</p>					
	not achievable	Unlikely to be achievable	Somewhat achievable	Achievable	Very achievable
<input type="checkbox"/> Do a crossword puzzle <input type="checkbox"/> Watch TV <input type="checkbox"/> Visit friends or family <input type="checkbox"/> Cook <input type="checkbox"/> Listen to music <input type="checkbox"/> Do crafts <input type="checkbox"/> Read <input type="checkbox"/> Take a nap <input type="checkbox"/> Go shopping <input type="checkbox"/> Take a walk <input type="checkbox"/> Exercise <input type="checkbox"/> Other:					



Keep in Mind

- Start with small goals and add more pleasant activities after you feel successful with your first try.
- Rethink the activities you would like to do to help increase their achievability.

Which of your activities can you do today?

It would be a good idea to start with your pleasant activities as soon as possible and establish them as part of your routine.

Which of your activities can you do today? If it is inconvenient to start an activity today, think about the pleasant activities you could do tomorrow.

Remember:

- Pleasant activities should be achievable.
- There are different reasons why you can feel that pleasant activities are not achievable.
- There are ways to do pleasant activities despite these reasons.

What prevents you from doing pleasant activities?

It can be very rewarding to do these activities together with the person you care for as well. However, it might be difficult at first to come up with pleasant activities that are suitable for both you and for the person you care for.

In this exercise, we will make a list of the pleasant activities you may be able to do with the person you care for. First, we take a look at the experience of Joe from the previous exercise.

**Joe**

Joe takes care of his brother who is living with dementia.

In addition to taking a nap while his sister takes care of his brother, Joe takes his brother out for walks around the neighbourhood. His brother enjoys the walk and Joe is able to get some exercise and fresh air too.

What would you like to do more often?

Take a look at the list below for examples you can do with the person you care for.

Pick at least one activity you would like to do more often with the person you care for.

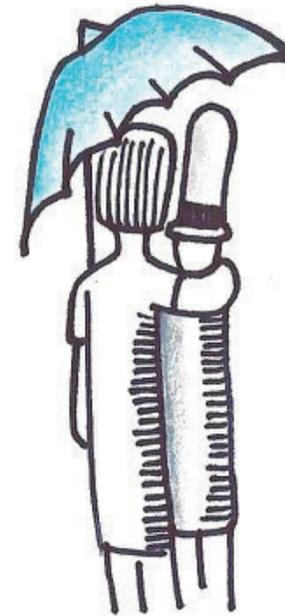
If an activity is not listed below, add the activity you would like to do.

Activity



List of examples:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Listen to music | <input type="checkbox"/> Watch birds or animals |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Play a musical instrument | <input type="checkbox"/> Do handiwork or crafts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Take a relaxing walk | <input type="checkbox"/> Look at photos |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Listen to or read stories, newspaper articles, poems, etc. | <input type="checkbox"/> Watch the clouds or explore nature |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Go out to eat together | <input type="checkbox"/> Recall and discuss happy memories |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cook and prepare snacks | <input type="checkbox"/> Have friends over to visit |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: |



Congratulations, you have completed this Unit!

Keep in mind that despite the challenges, pleasant activities are good for you and are necessary to ensure that you are able to keep providing care for the person you care for.

RELATED LEARNING UNITS

- Module 3 Unit 3 Thinking differently
- Module 4 Unit 2 Eating, drinking and preventing health problems
- Module 5 Unit 4 Difficulty sleeping



Carer support groups can offer you a safe place to talk about your role as a carer. They can put you in touch with other carers who may be experiencing similar things to you so you can share advice and suggestions to support each other.

Carer support groups can sometimes be organised around specific caring roles and the situation of the person you care for. For information call My Aged Care on 1800 200 422.

Carer Support Groups



You finished this unit, well done!

Unit 3. Thinking differently

Why is this learning unit important?

Your thoughts determine how you feel. Unhelpful thoughts can make us feel unhappy or dissatisfied.

How will this unit help me?

This unit will help you to think differently and change your unhelpful thoughts into helpful thoughts.

What will I learn?

- You cannot change what happens, but you can change your response.
- To think differently by changing unhelpful thoughts into helpful thoughts.
- Thinking differently will help to make you feel better.



There are different ways to deal with stressful events: One way is to think differently.

Lost keys

Jo is married to Max who is living with dementia. She is about to leave the house to visit a friend. Max says, 'I can't find my keys! You cannot leave me without keys!' Jo thinks to herself: 'I cannot leave him alone anymore.' She starts to feel miserable.

Check your understanding



What do you think Jo should do?

Click on the answers you think are the right things for Jo to do and drop them into the box.

- Tell Max that she cannot help him search now and leave.
- Search for the keys until she finds them.
- Tell Max that he should be more careful not to lose his keys in the future.
- Think to herself, 'Max has dementia and is sometimes worried when he loses things. I can take some time to help and then go.' Then call her friend and explain that she will come later.

ANSWERS - Unit 3. Thinking differently

Check your understanding



- ✗ **Tell Max that she cannot help him search now and leave.**
This is bad advice. Max has dementia and is feeling worried. He could be very upset if Jo leaves the house right now.
- ✗ **Search for the keys until she finds them.**
This could be helpful, as Max might feel safer if he has the keys. However, this may mean Jo misses meeting her friend and is left feeling miserable.
- ✗ **Tell Max that he should be more careful not to lose his keys in the future.**
This is not such good advice. Max has dementia, he cannot help misplacing things.
- ✓ **Think to herself, 'Max has dementia and is sometimes worried when he loses things. I can take some time to help and then go.'** Then call her friend and explain that she will come later.
This is good advice. It is not the fact that Max has lost the keys that are making Jo miserable, but her concerns that she always needs to help Max and cannot leave him alone anymore. After Jo has called her friend, she can help Max search for the keys, which will make him feel safer. Then she can go to visit her friend.

Keep in mind



- There are lots of different ways to deal with events.
- Negative thoughts may make us feel sad or dissatisfied.
- By thinking differently, you might feel better and be able to manage situations better.



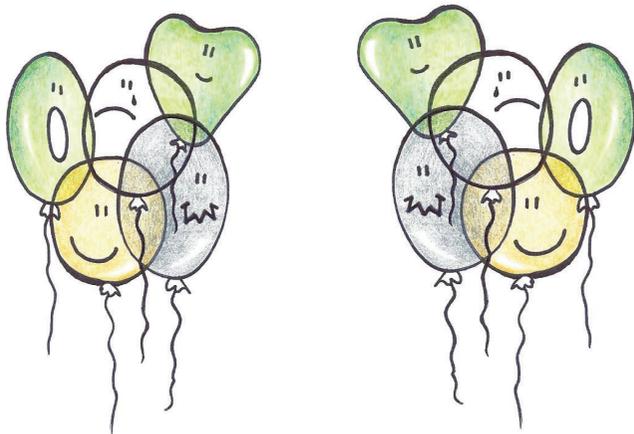
Thoughts determine how we feel

It is not an event that makes you feel angry, sad, happy or guilty, it is your thinking.

An event can be anything:

- The person living with dementia becomes angry when you ask them something.
- Your family member who promised to help you does not turn up or cancels on you.
- The person you care for cannot find something.
- Your family member is blaming you for not providing the right care.

Many people think that their feelings are a direct consequence of a particular event. However, it is the way you think about the event that determines how you feel.



Jo's unhelpful and helpful thoughts



Jo thinks to herself when Max cannot find the keys: 'I cannot leave Max alone anymore.' This makes her feel miserable.

This means that Jo is having an unhelpful thought. Unhelpful thoughts can make it harder to respond in useful ways to situations like this.

Jo could think instead: 'Max has dementia and is sometimes worried when he loses things. I can take some time to help and then go.' This different way of thinking will probably make Jo feel better, help her to stay calm and compassionate.

Helpful thoughts like this can make it easier to respond in useful ways to situations like this.

Keep in mind



Remember:

- It is not the situation itself that makes you feel angry, sad, happy or miserable.
- Helpful or unhelpful thoughts can determine how you respond to a situation.
- By changing your thoughts, you could help change the way you feel.

Unhelpful thoughts make you feel bad

Aron has cared for his wife, Joan for several years now. Aron has many thoughts. Some make him feel worse, some make him feel better.

Check your understanding



Can you indicate which of Aron's thoughts may help to make him feel better?

Select that thought and drop them into the box.

- Aron thinks: 'Making time for myself helps me to provide better care.'
- When Joan is not happy, Aron feels, 'I am a bad carer.'
- 'Maybe the dementia will go away, and Joan will be better.'
- 'No one understands how hard it is to be a carer.'
- 'No one can provide the care the way I do.'
- 'Asking others can help me to share the duties of care.'
- Aron thinks, 'Dementia is a disease, it is not anyone else's fault.'



ANSWERS - Unit 3. Thinking differently

Check your understanding



✓ **Aron thinks: 'Making time for myself helps me to provide better care.'**

This is a helpful thought. No one should feel guilty when taking time for themselves. It might help the carer to continue to provide care in the long term and to do other valuable things as well.

× **When Joan is not happy, Aron feels, 'I am a bad carer.'**

This thought will make Aron feel unhappy and sad. The mood of the person with dementia does not depend solely on the carer. For example, mood can also be related to dementia, depression, functional ability or personality.

× **'Maybe the dementia will go away, and Joan will be better.'**

This thought may make Aron feel disappointed as people with dementia continue to decline. There are many diseases that cause dementia. Unfortunately, there is no cure for any of these diseases yet.

× **'No one understands how hard it is to be a carer.'**

This thought may make Aron feel upset, isolated and lonely. There might be people who do not understand how hard it is to be a carer. However, talking to other people may help them better understand what dementia is and at the same time may help you to take some pressure off.

× **'No one can provide the care the way I do.'**

This thought could make Aron feel lonely, isolated and under a lot of pressure. Although others may provide care in a different way, that does not mean that it is always of a lower standard. It is important to involve others in the care of a person with dementia, to prevent becoming overwhelmed.

✓ **'Asking others can help me to share the duties of care.'**

This is a helpful thought that may make Aron feel more in control. Involving other people in caregiving has lots of potential benefits, for instance, the carer will be able to take breaks more regularly and be able to provide care for a longer period of time.

✓ **Aron thinks, 'Dementia is a disease, it is not anyone else's fault.'**

This thought is helpful and might prevent feelings of guilt.

Keep in mind

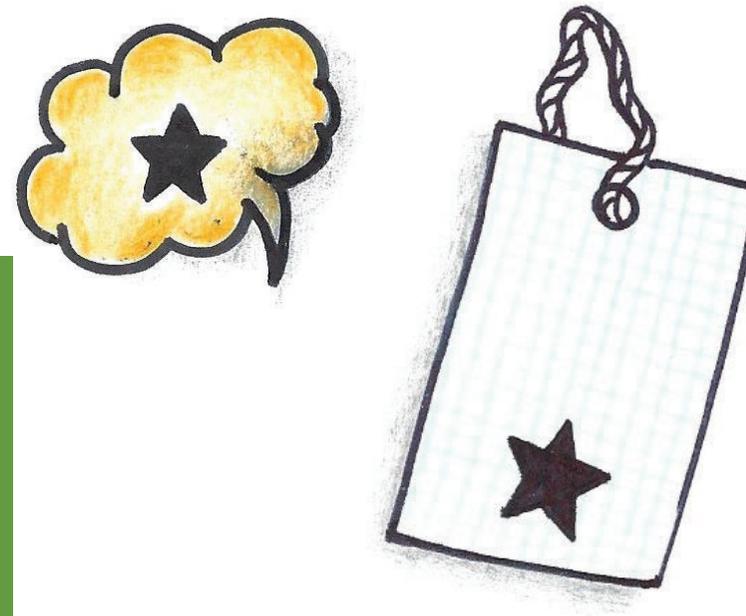


- Unhelpful thoughts can make you feel bad.
- Helpful thoughts are important to feel better and will assist you in dealing with situations in a more useful way.
- To feel better, it is important to identify unhelpful thoughts.

More information and tips

For more information and tips on:

- how to ask others for help and involving others
- how to relax
- how to deal with changed behaviour
- how to plan pleasant activities for yourself.



Carer support groups can offer a safe place to talk about your role as a carer. They can put you in touch with other carers who may be experiencing similar things to you so you can share advice and suggestions to support each other.

For information call My Aged Care on 1800 200 422.
If you feel you are not coping and need to talk to someone immediately contact Lifeline (24 hours a day) on 13 11 14.

EXTRA INFO

Matching feelings to an unhelpful thought

Xavier meets Gabriel

Xavier takes care of his father, who is living with dementia. When he is doing some shopping, he meets his friend Gabriel, who asks: 'How are you? Don't you need any help to care for your father?'

Xavier thinks to himself, 'If Gabriel thinks I need help, he must think I am a bad carer.'

Check your understanding



How do you think Xavier is feeling?
(more answers possible)

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|---|--------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Upset | ✓ | Upset |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lonely | ✓ | Lonely |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sad | ✓ | Sad |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Happy | ✓ | Angry |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Angry | ✓ | Guilty |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Guilty | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Supported | | |

Matching feelings to a helpful thought

Xavier thought, 'If Gabriel thinks I need help, he must think I am a bad carer.'

This is an unhelpful thought that may leave Xavier feeling upset, lonely, sad, angry or guilty.

What if Xavier thinks to himself, 'If Gabriel thinks I need help, he must care about me and my father and wants to make sure we are doing well?'

Check your understanding



How does Xavier feel now?
(more answers possible)

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|---|-----------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Upset | ✓ | Happy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lonely | ✓ | Supported |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sad | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Happy | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Angry | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Guilty | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Supported | | |

Helpful thoughts make you feel better

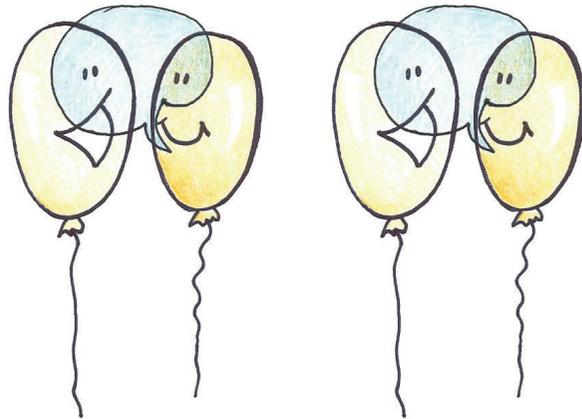
Xavier thought, 'If Gabriel thinks I need help, he must care about my father and wants to make sure we are doing well.'

This is a helpful thought that may leave Xavier feeling happy or supported.

Keep in mind



- Sometimes you cannot change the things that happen.
- But sometimes you can change your response (thoughts).



Activity



What are your unhelpful thoughts?

In an earlier example you indicated which thoughts are helpful and which can be unhelpful. Below you will find a list of unhelpful thoughts.

Which unhelpful thoughts do you have?

Please select the thoughts you have or provide additional examples.

- I have to do everything alone.
- He/she does not care about me anymore.
- When he/she is not happy, it means I am a bad caregiver.
- Maybe he/she will get better.
- I must always be available for the person you care for.
- I should not consider my own needs if I want to be a good carer.
- No one understands how hard it is to be a carer.
- No one can provide the care for the person you care for the way I do.
- The person you care for has complicated my life.
- I have no time for others because I am a carer.
- I feel sorry for the person I care for.
- Other people are better off than the person you care for and I.
- Other...

Activity **What are your helpful thoughts?****Which helpful thoughts do you have?**

Please select the thoughts you have or provide additional examples.

- It is okay to take time to relax as it will help me to provide a good standard of care.
- Sharing my feelings with others helps to take the pressure off.
- Asking help from others can help me to share the load.
- Making time for myself helps me to care for the person I care for.
- Dementia is a disease; it is not anyone's fault.
- Other...

Keep in mind 

Important to remember:

- Remember that if you want to feel better, you can change your unhelpful thoughts to helpful thoughts.

Helpful thoughts make you feel better

You cannot change the things that happen, but you can change your response to them. Or in other words: you cannot change the situation, but you can change your thoughts.

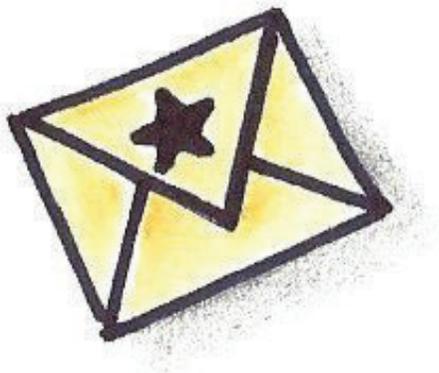
In the next exercise you will work to change your unhelpful thoughts into helpful thoughts.



Now you try.

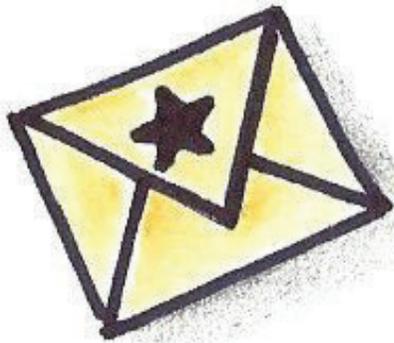
Try to think of a recent event that made you feel upset and fill out these questions.

Have a look at the example for some help.



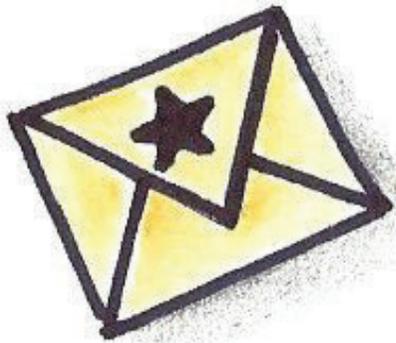
Name:	
What was the event that made you feel upset or miserable?	
What were your unhelpful thoughts?	
What would be more helpful to think?	
How could the helpful thoughts make you feel?	

Aron takes care of his wife Joan, who is living with dementia. He writes the following:



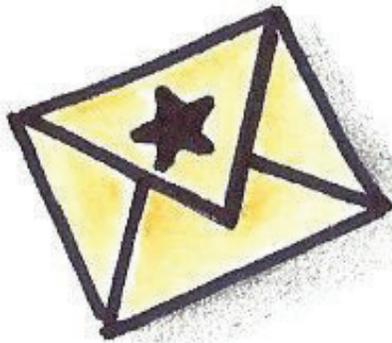
Name:	Aron
What was the event that made you feel upset or miserable?	<i>Yesterday my wife, Joan, and I visited some friends. We had tea together. Joan dropped her cup on the floor. When they started to clean the floor, Joan did not help, but she stood in the way. She did not apologise for her behaviour but laughed.</i>
What were your unhelpful thoughts?	<i>They are upset with my wife and won't invite us to their house again.</i>
What would be more helpful to think?	<i>My wife has dementia and is unable to think and act in the way she did before she had dementia. Our friends won't blame my wife as I have explained that my wife has dementia and how her functioning has declined.</i>
How could the helpful thoughts make you feel?	<i>Instead of feeling worried and ashamed, I would have felt happy about the day we spent with our friends and glad they understood.</i>

Helen takes care of her brother, Matty, who is living with dementia. She writes the following:



Name:	Helen
What was the event that made you feel upset or miserable?	<i>A week ago, our sister came to visit us. At the end of the day, I said to Matty, 'It was a great day, don't you think so?' He said that he was not sure, because he could not remember exactly what we had been doing. He said he was tired and that he wanted to sleep.</i>
What were your unhelpful thoughts?	<i>Nothing we do is worthwhile because Matty forgets everything. Everything is ruined because of his dementia.</i>
What would be more helpful to think?	<i>Even though he cannot remember what we did, I know he had a great day too, and that is what counts. He smiled a lot today and kept saying how nice it was that our sister came.</i>
How could the helpful thoughts make you feel?	<i>Instead of feeling sad and miserable, I would have felt happy about the day we spent with our sister and satisfied that Matty enjoyed the day too..</i>

Laura takes care of her mother-in-law, who is living with dementia. She writes the following:



Name:

Laura

What was the event that made you feel upset or miserable?

A few days ago, my mother-in-law asked why she had not seen me for such a long time, but I had visited her just two days before.

What were your unhelpful thoughts?

She wants me to come more often, but that is unfair. I have my job and my children; it is too much for me.

What would be more helpful to think?

Because of her dementia she has forgotten that I came to see her two days ago. Let's try to stay calm and talk with her about what she did today.

How could the helpful thoughts make you feel?

I would have felt less upset. Maybe even calm, I don't know. Let's try to think differently next time.

Check your understanding 

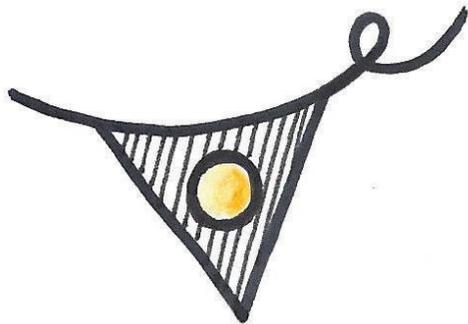
How would it make you feel?

How would the helpful thoughts make you feel?

<input type="checkbox"/> Happy	<input type="checkbox"/> Angry
<input type="checkbox"/> Relieved	<input type="checkbox"/> Less stressed
<input type="checkbox"/> Depressed	<input type="checkbox"/> Less upset
	<input type="checkbox"/> Other...

Congratulations, you tried to think differently!

Practice makes perfect. Do you want to try one more time?



Name: _____

What was the event that made you feel upset or miserable?

What were your unhelpful thoughts?

What would be more helpful to think?

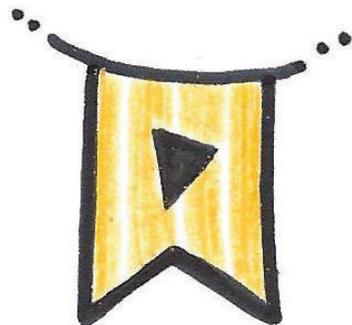
How could the helpful thoughts make you feel?

Let's review what you have learned in this Unit:

- You cannot change what happens, but you can change your response.
- You can learn to think differently, changing your unhelpful thoughts into helpful thoughts.
- Thinking differently makes you feel better.

RELATED LEARNING UNITS

- Module 2 Unit 2 Improving communication
- Module 5 Unit 1 Introduction to person-centred care approach
- Module 4 Unit 1 Eating and drinking - more pleasant mealtimes



You finished this learning unit, well done!

Would you like to try the following relaxation exercise?



Keep in mind that there are events in which feeling upset, miserable, sad or angry is inevitable. Examples are: if the person you care for needs to go to hospital or if you lose a dear friend. To change your thoughts in such situations would not do justice to your feelings.

Tip

Neck movements

With this exercise you will feel less tension in your neck. It will also increase the blood flow to your brain.



This is how you do it:

- Make sure to move slowly and with attention.
- Bend your neck forward and backward.
- Inhale while you lift your head up and back. Exhale while you drop your chin to your chest.
- Rotate your chin from side to side.
- Inhale when your chin is in the centre. Exhale when you look to the side.
- Drop your ear towards your shoulder.
- Inhale when you are in the centre. Exhale when you drop your ear to your shoulder.
- Repeat 5 times.



You finished this unit, well done!