

Are You on The Road to Burnout?

No matter how busy you are, you can't care for anyone else if you don't take care of yourself. It's normal for carers to feel overwhelmed at times, but letting those feelings continue is the quickest way to end up with burnt out. Maintaining vital self-care habits can help prevent health and wellbeing issues that arise from burnout. You may be on the road to burnout if:

- Every day feels like a bad day.
- There is no balance between caring for yourself and the person living with dementia.
- Caring for yourself seems like a total waste of energy.
- You feel tired all the time.
- You feel like nothing you do makes a difference.
- There may be nothing new, but your stress has simply built up over time.

Try to define what the most difficult area of caring is for you. Ask yourself: **'What do I really need help with, and how can I break down my role into manageable pieces?'** Sometimes talking to an outsider can help pinpoint the stress triggers, e.g. family, friend, neighbour, service provider.

Tips to Manage Burnout - Try to break things down step by step

Day 1	Manage your Time	Try to set boundaries and set up a routine that works for everyone. Factor in rest breaks.
Day 2	Physical Health	Exercise and healthy diets are proven stress relievers.
Day 3	Make Time to Unwind	Ensure each day includes time to unwind. It may be as simple as enjoying a nice meal or walking in the garden.
Day 4	Practise Mindfulness	Take time to learn mindfulness as it is designed to teach you to be in the present moment and to manage thoughts and emotions. 1 minute mindfulness exercises are easily factored in.
Day 5	Find Coping Strategies	Develop some strategies to relax when something unexpected happens. It could involve stretching or even listening to a song that calms you. Practice your responses until they become a habit.
Day 6	Explore Ways to Get a Break	Explore family, friends, service providers, Carer Gateway or Dementia Australia
Day 7	Seek Professional Help	Don't be hesitant about asking for help. If you think you need external support with your burnout, speak with your health professional.

Practice Effective Coping Skills

Coping skills require facing a problem and drawing on your internal resources. One strategy may be changing a small part of your routine to try to cope better. Be mindful of your triggers or challenges as they will help build effective coping skills more easily than carers who either deny issues or feel the situation is hopeless.

Feeling “Empowered” - *feeling powerless can contribute to carer burnout.*

- **Practice Acceptance.** We often ask the question “Why?”, but be mindful that you won’t feel better, so try to avoid searching for something to blame.
- **Be Organized.** A calendar can help you remember when it’s time for doctor visits etc.
- **Be Grateful.** Think about the ways caring has made you stronger and what you have learnt. It may have even brought you closer to the person you’re taking care of.
- **Find Balance.** It’s easier to manage difficult situations when there is something else in your life you find satisfying, so find something that has meaning to **You**.
- **Focus on What You Can Control.** You can’t have more hours in the day or change the weather outside, so focus on your responses to difficult situations.
- **Break Things Down Step by Step.** Don’t think about what must be done over the week as it can feel overwhelming: make a list and work through it one task at a time.

Think about your body as a car. With the right fuel and maintenance, it can run dependably. Disregard the maintenance and it will start to give you trouble.

1 Minute Mindfulness Ideas

Relaxation Breathing - Get into a comfortable position. Take some slow breaths and on exhalation consciously release any tension discovered in your body or mind. Scan down through your body, working from the head down through all muscles and organs, and release tension from the most tensed parts of your body.

Dishwashing Mindfulness - As you wash the dishes, ask yourself: How warm or cold is the water? Do I have too much or too little detergent? How does the sponge feel in my hand? What smells am I experiencing? What outside stimulation is there in this room? What’s the feel of the dishes? It’s Okay if your mind drifts off as this is completely normal. Let your mind drift and then come back to the dishes.

Be mindful of the task you are currently undertaking. Use this idea with other mundane chores where the mind wanders onto everything else you need to do.