

*You may find some of the following ideas helpful.*

- Allow yourself to really feel what you're feeling, no matter what that is.
- If you need to cry, then cry – tears can be therapeutic.
- Talk - it is so important to talk about your feelings even at the most difficult times.
- Don't be overcome by resentment, try to resolve the source of anger.
- Slow down and don't make major decisions while you are upset.
- Be kind and patient with yourself. Look for a balance between happy and sad, angry and peaceful, and guilty and glad.
- **Learn to laugh** - revive your sense of humour.
- Reassure yourself that you're only human and that it's normal to **sometimes** feel angry, distressed, or resentful. Be mindful these feelings don't linger.
- Remind yourself that it's simply not possible to care for someone on your own 24 hours a day – and that you're doing the best you can.
- Try to think about what the person living with dementia would do if the roles were reversed and they were caring for you. What would you want them to do for you?  
*Would you want them to feel upset if they were finding their caring role difficult?*
- Set true probabilities. We often assume our expectations are reasonable when they may not be, so work out what you can and can't change, and focus on what you can change.
- Practice living in the moment and focus on any positives that you may have experienced on that day, rather than what went wrong.
- Focus on the positive differences you have made, not on the things you didn't do.

### **Why you might feel Guilt.**

- You're tired.
- You sometimes resent your caring responsibilities.
- You want some time to yourself.
- You sometimes feel angry or frustrated with the person.
- You need to reconsider a promise that you made earlier – for example, "I'll never put you into a residential facility".
- You feel you're not living up to your own – or other people's – expectations.

### **Tips to Help Minimise Your Stress.**

- Avoid asking direct questions that requires the person to search for 'factual' information, as this may help reduce behaviours, thus reducing your stress levels.
- **Listen to the Expert** – '*the person you are caring for*' and learn from them. Often 'feelings' are more important than the facts, so try to present information that creates good feelings for them. The person may not remember what was said or done, but they are fully aware of how the interaction made them.
- Don't contradict or argue.
- Rephrase your communication if the person is unable to respond to your requests.
- Don't talk to the person as a child.
- Use orientating names or labels such as 'your son, Jack'.

## Reassure, Reconsider, Redirect and RELAX

Where is the dog, where is the dog, the same question repeatedly, and no explanation that the dog has died will suffice. Try saying the dog is fast asleep and see if you have a different response.

### Habit Loading – Something to Ponder

- Our natural tendencies are to be creatures of habit – we tend to have set routines, and it can be challenging to stray from them, particularly while in a caring role. Habit loading can involve looking at what habits you currently have and loading another one on to it. Don't add more than one load at a time, until the new habit becomes the 'norm'.
- Formula for Habit Loading – *Before/After (current habit), I will (new habit)*
  - After I have a cup of coffee each morning, I will meditate for one minute.
  - When I sit down for tea, I will think about 1 thing I am grateful for that happened during the day.
  - When the phone rings I will take a deep breath and smile before I answer it.
  - During the time spent in the shower, I will be mindful of the temperature of the water, and how it feels running over my body.
  - Every time the person living with dementia repeats a question, I will stop, take a breath and smile before I respond.
  - Whenever the person living with dementia refuses to get dressed, I will suggest a different activity rather than argue.