

Male carers bring distinctive strengths and perspectives to the caring role, as often their approach to caring is embodied in level-headedness and problem-solving skills. While emotional support is essential, male carers are skilful at addressing the practical aspects of caring, such as managing finances and medical appointments. Despite invaluable inputs, male carers often face unique challenges and barriers with social stigma and outdated gender norms discouraging men from seeking support when needed. At times, male carer's experiences may lead to feelings of isolation and invisibility.

Male Carer Story

Jamie

Q Can you tell give us a little history about your lifestyle before becoming a carer?

I lived in a suburb close to the city and was working full time for an advertising company, and as a single man most of my time went into furthering my career.

Q Can you tell us a little about your role now?

After my father passed, I took on the role of caring for my mother. Initially I was able to balance both my career and my mother, however as her care needs increased, I needed to rethink the work/life balance to care for her full time. As an only child the responsibility became mine.

Q Are you a full- or part time carer?

I am now a full-time carer.

Q Can you give me a couple of highlights from your caring role?

Among the many experiences of caring, several moments stand out as significant. These include the deepening of our relationship, and the shared feelings of achievement amidst some really challenging times.

Q What have you found the hardest about caring for your mother?

One of the most challenging aspects involve watching my mother struggle with her forgetfulness, and decline in independence, and the toll it takes on both of us. Trying to find a pair of bras that would be easy for us to put on was a challenge I had given no thought to until the time arose. There is so much you never think of!

Q What did you wish you had known when you first started caring for your mother?

I wish I had been better prepared for the role. I wish I had taken the time to learn about the disease and what may occur as the disease progressed. I had no idea of the available resources and had certainly never heard of carer burnout.

Q What advice would you give someone new to caring?

- **Prioritise your own wellbeing**
- Learn and utilise the resources that are available to you
- Don't hesitate to ask for help
- Embrace each day with humour, compassion and patience
- Once again, prioritise your own wellbeing

Tips for Male Carers

- Accept that your role will change, particularly if caring for a spouse: you may have to take on the responsibilities of running your home combined with caring for your spouse.
- During periods of changed behaviours, try not to take it personally, and accept there will be times that you feel frustrated, resent the caring role, as well as grieving the loss of your old life.
- Taking care of a spouse, parent or relative with dementia is hard, and you don't need to go it alone. Ensure you reach out to friends and family as well as support groups and try to take breaks every day.
- Go easy on yourself, you are doing your best.
- Be patient with yourself, as you learn new skills or face new tasks.
- Forgive yourself for not being able to do everything.
- Take the time to learn all you can about the type of dementia you are caring for.
- Try to encourage physical activity.
- Learn what resources are available to you and use them.
- Learn how to cook nutritious meals meeting the needs of the person you are caring for.
- Try to implement a daily routine
- **Take breaks and look after yourself**