



Mental  
health &  
wellbeing



Support for life

# Caring for someone with a mental health condition

*With one in four people in the UK experiencing a mental health problem each year, their families and friends may suddenly find themselves having to become a carer.*

A carer is someone who provides help on a regular basis and isn't paid for this role.

If you support someone with a mental health problem you may feel anxious and stressed, face practical issues or have relationship problems from time to time. There is help for those living with mental health problems, and support for carers is increasingly being acknowledged.

## Learn about the illness

Because mental illness is not “visible”, it's incredibly difficult to understand what someone is going through, even if you're very close to that person. Once the person you are caring for has been diagnosed, it may be useful to learn more about their illness or condition. This will help you to understand how best to care for them, as well as recognising the symptoms and behaviour associated with their illness. Mental health charities, NHS Choices and other mental health websites can provide the information.

Everyone will be affected differently by their diagnosis and the symptoms exhibited will vary from person to

person, day to day. The uncertainty of what a new day might bring can be one of the most challenging aspects of caring for someone with a mental health condition. So be prepared for this and find ways to care for yourself too.

## Look after yourself

Caring for someone with a mental health problem, as well as dealing with every day issues can be overwhelming and can lead to anxiety and depression. It's therefore really important that you find ways to take care of you and your needs. For example:

- Try not to feel guilty about doing things you want to do, such as a hobby or leisure activity.
- Find time for rest. Lack of sleep makes it more difficult to deal with every day issues
- Eat healthily and try and get some regular physical activity.
- Look after your general health as much as you can.

## Get help

Caring for someone with a mental health problem can be very lonely. Find someone you can trust to talk to, especially if you're struggling to cope. This can be a friend or even your GP. You may also find it easier to speak to peers, there may be a local carers group that you can join. Check out NHS Choices, Mind and Rethink Mental Illness for details of groups in your area. If you are facing practical problems such as funding or debt, see our financial fact sheets for information and guidance.

## Carer's assessments

You may be entitled to support from your local authority. To find out you will need to contact your local council's social services department. The carer's assessment will focus on your needs. If you are found to have eligible needs (dependant on your financial circumstances) then the local authority will give you a support plan, which will set out the support you are entitled to and how this will be funded. It is an agreement between you and the local authority.

## Mindfulness

A powerful tool to get some 'rest'.

Check out the NHS website for more information: <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/mindfulness.aspx>

## Further sources of help

There is a lot of information available to help you cope with caring for someone with a mental health problem. Please have a look at these organisations and charities for further tips.

- Mind  
[www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)
- Mental Health Care  
[http://www.mentalhealthcare.org.uk/support\\_for\\_family\\_members\\_and\\_other\\_unpaid\\_carers](http://www.mentalhealthcare.org.uk/support_for_family_members_and_other_unpaid_carers)
- Carers UK  
<https://www.carersuk.org/help-and-advice>
- Rethink Mental Illness  
<https://www.rethink.org/carers-family-friends/what-you-need-to-know/supporting-someone-with-a-mental-illness/you>
- NHS Choices  
<http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/social-care-and-support-guide/Pages/benefits-for-carers.aspx>
- Carers Trust  
<https://carers.org/article/mental-health>

[www.ben.org.uk](http://www.ben.org.uk)

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**Free, confidential helpline:**  
**08081 311 333**

Ben - Motor and Allied Trades Benevolent Fund. Lynwood Court, Lynwood Village, Rise Road, Ascot SL5 0FG. A charity registered in England and Wales (no.297877) and Scotland (no.SC039842). Registered with the Homes and Communities Agency (no. LH3766).



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