

What is carer fatigue?

When we talk about someone living with a diagnosis of dementia, we're talking about two people, the person with the diagnosis of dementia and the person supporting them.

We're confident that the person living with dementia will get the support that they need through friends, family, and paid carers. Unfortunately, the support partner often gets overlooked and sometimes even neglected. The support partner's focus is to make sure that the person living with dementia has the fullest life possible, making sure that all of their needs are met. Sadly, there is a common phase the support partner enters which is termed carer fatigue: but what is carer fatigue?

Carer fatigue isn't just one symptom. It's a combination of emotions and reactions to various situations that a person experiences throughout their day. It may come and go, or linger for weeks on end. A carer may feel some or all of these feelings. These are a loss of interest, exhaustion, anxiety, difficulty getting motivated, a short fuse, feeling irritable and restless. All of these emotions are completely normal and understandable, but the more important thing to focus on is how can we support the support partner as well as the person living with dementia.

Here are a few tips that we have found useful to help carers work through their carer fatigue:

Self care

Make sure you make time for yourself where you can. Exercise, sleep well and eat well, and find time to do the things that bring you purpose and meaning. If you're running on empty, you have little to give and it's then much harder to support someone else.



Use your support network

Create a support network for yourself. Reach out to your friends and family, and think about when it might be time to bring a paid carer in to do the things you may not need to.

Respite and Short-Term Care

Sometimes a short break is all we need. Respite is a great solution to help families keep their loved one living with dementia at home longer. Short-Term Care means placing your loved one in a permanent care environment on a temporary basis to allow a support partner to have a break. During that time, the support partner is able to "reset, replenish, and rejuvenate self". Having these short respite breaks throughout the year allows for the support partner to keep reassessing the needs of their loved one and their own needs.

Is it time for permanent care?

There is never a right or wrong answer to this question. Our "Questions and Answers" are for people living with dementia and for the loved ones supporting them as they consider permanent care, residential aged care, home and community care or a nursing home.



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