

## **Caring for the carer: *How talking with a counsellor helps***

Many carers' dedication to the care of their friend or family member(s) is combined with limited time and, or resources to care for themselves. With their focus regularly on the person being cared for carers can overlook the importance of self-care, and frequently put their own needs last.

Being a carer is a demanding role that often means extreme stress, and a wide range of emotions are experienced. Carers face many losses throughout their caring journey including changes in lifestyle, family, relationships, employment and finances. These losses can mean significant grief, which may be largely unacknowledged. Without adequate support and self-care, you can increase your risk of adverse health effects.

Talking with a professional counsellor can help. The National Carer Counsellor Program (NCCP) provides carers access to short-term counselling services, and Carers NSW coordinates this program in New South Wales. Professional counsellors in the program are trained and sensitive to issues related to the caring role.

### ***What is counselling?***

Counselling is about talking to someone who can help you explore and understand your caring situation and the emotions you are experiencing. Seeing a counsellor is not a sign that you are 'not coping' or 'a failure'. It is a way to help support and care for you.

Counselling can focus on areas such as:

- managing stress
- emotional support
- practical problem-solving techniques
- coping skills
- health and wellbeing
- transition issues
- grief and loss.

### ***Some common concerns***

Sometimes the need to 'talk it over' is clear. At other times, you may feel confused, guilty or embarrassed about what you need to talk about. Feelings such as anger or resentment may arise in your caring situation. These feelings are normal.

# Carer Life Course



Having an independent person to talk with can help reduce confusion, guilt, resentment and anxiety, or the isolation you may be experiencing and assist you gain clarity around issues to be addressed.

Finding time to have counselling can be challenging, but is well worth the effort. One of the first steps in caring for you is to make time to get some of your own needs met.

### ***How does the NCCP program work?***

The NCCP provides short-term counselling (up to six sessions) from qualified, professional counsellors. Counselling can be face-to-face or by telephone. Fees for counselling sessions are based on need, not your ability to pay.

You can request counselling for yourself, or refer a carer you know on their behalf (with their consent). You can also give your consent for a representative or service provider to make a referral for you.

To find out more, or to request counselling, please call the National Carer Line, Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm on **1800 242 636\***. Alternatively, Lifeline is a 24 hour service available after hours on **13 11 14**.

\*Free call except from mobile phones. Mobile calls at mobile rates.

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