



***Are you caring for an  
older family member or friend?***

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Do you assist an older member of your family or whānau, or an older friend, who needs support because they are disabled or have a health condition (including mental health or an addiction), or injury?

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Older people living independently in their own home may still require day to day support in order to continue doing so. Perhaps your older family member or friend is living with you.

When an older person needs everyday help, it is often provided by their children or younger relatives, or by a younger friend.

Most carers of older people are in the workforce and juggle paid employment with their caring roles. If we're caregiving from a distance we'll be using technology and visits to keep in touch, and trying to arrange support from afar.

A growing number of us are 'sandwich generation' carers, assisting both older and younger members of our family, whānau, or aiga.

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**Caregiving is not easy.**



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*"If I'm honest, it's a huge stress at this point in my life. My mother's wellbeing sits in my mind every day, even when I'm trying to relax. When difficult things happen my adrenaline gets going so fast - I am always at the ready!"*

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**Tricia, 45**

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### THE POSITIVES

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Most carers say they feel positive about contributing to the safety and wellbeing of older people who rely on them. It is a commitment they value. Many find the situation brings them closer to that person and strengthens their relationship. Many also see that their caring helps the whole family, whānau and aiga.



*"I learned things about my father I had never known, because we shared so much time together. Those last years were some of the best, even though they were also tough."*

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ANNE, 52

## THE CHALLENGES

As well as being rewarding, caring can bring pressures, such as:

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- **increased stress** – ‘rollercoaster’ experiences
- **feeling torn** between the needs of children/family/ friends and others you care for
- **ongoing exhaustion** especially if you are using your annual leave for caring and not for recharging your batteries
- **less time to meet your own health needs** – physical, emotional and mental
- **feeling socially isolated and less connected to others**, with less time to enjoy hobbies, friendships, and interests
- **guilt** when expectations of yourself, or by others, aren't met
- **increased financial demands** – possibly financial distress
- **juggling work with care commitments** – needing more time off work, being distracted or interrupted on the job
- **tensions arising between siblings** and other relatives, or around stepfamily complications
- supporting someone whose health is declining quickly or whose condition (such as dementia) results in **challenging behaviour**
- **becoming more prone to care-related injuries** (e.g. back strain), higher anxiety, getting sick more often, and possibly depression



*"I am an only child and my elderly parents live in the South Island. Every few weeks there is a crisis that requires me to make lots of phone calls or fly down. My own family is suffering and we can't afford the financial strain."*

**BARRY, 42**

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## What helps carers?

The following strategies have proved helpful for many carers. Which ones may be helpful for you?

### Recognise things are changing

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**The way things have been may not be possible now.** You and your older friend or family member are in unsettling, uncharted territory. Accepting there are things you can't control can be challenging. So can managing the mix of personal emotions and reactions that happen at such times.

### Pace yourself

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**Caregiving is more of a marathon than a sprint.** Things will unfold, bit by bit. Try not to rush decisions or actions.



*"I feel blessed to care for my Dad in his old age. We have a large family so breaks are not a problem, but I find I need to be proactive and ask for help."*

TUA 60

## Know your rights as a carer

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[This information](#) can assist you if issues arise. If you are unsure about your rights and responsibilities as a family carer for an older relative or friend, seek legal advice. See the [Community Law website](#) to find your local Community Law centre.

## Would a needs assessment be useful?

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- **A needs assessment** is the formal gateway to access various kinds of community and government help. Your GP can organise this for your older family member or friend, or contact a local Needs Assessment Service Coordination (NASC) service, funded by your DHB. [Find them online.](#)
- **Regularly observe and seek the views of your older friend or family member.** If they want more support, offer to arrange another assessment.
- **Consider if you or your relative may also have cultural or other needs.** How could these needs be met, to enhance wellbeing?
- **Ensure your older friend or family member is at the centre of all discussions and planning, where possible.** Don't 'take over'; this can cause tension and distress.

# TOP 10 TIPS

## Help available

Ask for help. You don't have to do everything on your own. There are a wide range of financial, practical and general support options for carers.

### 1 A Guide for Carers

This handbook outlines the help available from government agencies. It includes information about funded services and support, such as financial help, needs assessments (NASC), help at home, respite, making and resolving complaints, obtaining equipment and housing modifications, assistance with personal cares such as showering, access to daily living aids, and more. [See it online.](#)

Or, request a free print copy - phone 0800 777 797 or email [centre@carers.net.nz](mailto:centre@carers.net.nz)

### 2 Work and Income

If you are caring full-time for a friend or family member in their own home, who would otherwise need to receive hospital or residential level care, you may be eligible for the **Supported Living Payment**. Phone 0800 559 009, visit your local office or visit its [website](#). Other funding options may be available via an assessment.

### 3 Carers New Zealand

Carers New Zealand provides comprehensive, up to date information, advice, learning and support for New Zealand's 400,000+ family, whānau, and aiga carers:

- an excellent [website](#)
- free advice at 0800 777 797 or [centre@carers.net.nz](mailto:centre@carers.net.nz)
- helpful [articles](#)
- the quarterly *Family Care* magazine (order a sample copy to see if you'd like to subscribe)
- ways to link with other carers in a similar situation to you
- networking through the Facebook community - search for [WeCareNZ](#)
- Twitter: @CarersNZ

### 4 The doctor and health professionals

Develop good relationships with the medical professionals that support you and your older friend or family member. They can answer your questions and help guide you to support options.



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## 5 Share the care

Consider who else can help to assist your older family member, and how. Have a meeting of family, whānau, aiga and close friends to talk honestly about whatever care is needed. Include the older person you assist in any decision-making. Meet again whenever needs change.

## 6 Connect with other carers

If possible, meet up with other carers in your community. Phone 0800 777 797 to ask about local support groups for carers. See Carers New Zealand's [Meet Ups Toolkit](#) to arrange get-togethers with other carers in your community for learning, sharing, and enjoyment. And join Carers New Zealand Facebook's community – search [WeCareNZ](#)

## 7 Use regular time out - respite care

Be proactive about breaks and relief care. Plan regular short breaks and organise time out for longer periods when this is possible.

- See Carers New Zealand's [Time Out Guide](#) and be sure to ask your doctor or NASC about your respite funding and planning options. Being proactive about respite will help you cope with caring over the long term.
- See this useful [Weekly Time Out Planner](#)
- See [Take 1 Minute, Take 5](#) to find bite-sized virtual breaks for carer wellbeing, at times when breaks away from home aren't possible. Choose from video, audio, and other fun options to suit your mood!

## 8 Learn about your friend or family member's health condition, disability or injury

This can help you understand their situation and get an idea of what to expect. Contact support organisations linked to any health condition/s and tap into their information and services. Speak to your relative's GP and support team. Does the person you support have any cultural or other concerns related to their condition that they want to have addressed.

## 9 Note it down

Keep a notebook for all key information and contacts. Keep the notebook handy and refer to it if things change. Keep it updated.

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## Have an emergency plan

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**What's your strategy if there's a crisis or disaster and the family member or friend you support has to be moved? Or what if you get called away, fall ill, or are suddenly injured? What if you died? Having a plan in place will give you peace of mind from the 'what ifs'.**

Develop your own emergency plan as a family, or use Carers New Zealand's emergency plan tools, found on the homepage at [www.carers.net.nz](http://www.carers.net.nz), phone 0800 777 797, or email [centre@carers.net.nz](mailto:centre@carers.net.nz)

Its tools include a medications plan, an important papers checklist, an emergency carer ID card, and a comprehensive care planning guide. Complete these tools and share them with anyone who should have copies. Include your friend or family member in filling out these tools if possible. Update the documents whenever important details change.

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## Other Support

Support organisations and services around New Zealand. See them [online](#).

Helplines for times of crisis or hardship. See them [online](#).

[www.eldernet.co.nz](http://www.eldernet.co.nz)

[www.mycare.co.nz](http://www.mycare.co.nz)

(available from September 2015)

[www.seniorline.org.nz](http://www.seniorline.org.nz)

## Is English your second language?

Citizen Advice Bureau Language Link offers community advice on these matters in other languages. You can contact them on 09 624 2550, 0800 78 88 77 or [language@cab.org.nz](mailto:language@cab.org.nz)



Angela & Iris, copyright Terry Winn.  
Caring Moments, a project with Carers New Zealand.

# Making decisions

*"It felt such a responsibility to get it right for my father. He got so difficult and angry. It was a relief to use the knowledge of others who understood elderly people better than me. They helped me make good decisions."*

**TONY 64**

## Good communication is vital

**Who are the people around you who are important to your caring role?** Keep them in the loop to avoid misunderstandings and to maintain positive relationships. Keep in regular touch with

members of your family, whānau, and aiga, friends, neighbours, volunteers, government agencies, paid care providers, service providers, and health professionals.

## Find out your friend or family member's wishes

**Talk with your older family member or friend about their preferences regarding important choices,** in case you wind up with the legal power and responsibility to make decisions for them. This conversation may be uncomfortable for both of you, but it is essential.

For example, how long does your friend want to stay in their current home? Have they made a will? Do they have opinions about any future medical treatment, or about their funeral? This information can help you a lot if there comes a time to make difficult decisions.

## Enduring Powers of Attorney (EPAs)

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**An Enduring Power of Attorney is a legal document identifying who can take care of a person's personal or financial matters if they no longer can.** It's often a family member, close friend or lawyer. Encourage your friend or family member to put these 'EPAs' in place; it will ease their ongoing

care if they become unwell, and support your own decision-making as their carer if needed. There are two types of Attorney: one for property and assets, and one for personal health and welfare. Good information about these is important. [Find out more online](#)

## A Living Will

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**A Living Will sets out instructions which clarify what type of medical treatment a person does or doesn't want,** in quite a specific manner.

Your relative may like to create a Living Will. Carers New Zealand can advise how to organise this. To request information about Living Wills: Carers New Zealand, 0800 777 797, or email [centre@carers.net.nz](mailto:centre@carers.net.nz)



## Making decisions

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Gather good information and talk with your relative if possible, or draw on any record of their wishes. Seek professional advice if needed, and consult with other family members. Take the time you need to make an informed decision.



*Sidney & Margot, copyright Terry Winn,  
from the Caring Moments collection, a project with Carers New Zealand*

## Take care of yourself.

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Carers of older people often feel torn between relationships and responsibilities. Especially if they are in paid work while caring for others.

Remember that your life still needs to be about you.

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listen to  
music

eat  
healthy  
food

daily  
you  
time

build a  
support  
circle

see the  
doctor

create  
something

drink  
water  
often

organise  
time out

take a  
nap

have  
fun

plan  
regular  
breaks

slow,  
deep  
breaths

get  
into  
nature

rest  
and  
sleep

go for a  
walk

meditate

laugh

stretch  
exercise  
relax

write a  
journal

# Make self-care a priority

Your own safety  
and wellbeing is  
important too.

Find more self-care ideas and tools at  
[www.carers.net.nz](http://www.carers.net.nz) or phone 0800 777 797



## Work strategies

Keep your employer informed about your caring role and know your rights as a carer. Learn about [working while caring](#) or email [centre@carers.net.nz](mailto:centre@carers.net.nz) for advice and tips on engaging with your employer.

**Think carefully before quitting a job to care full-time.** This can have an impact on many things, including income, career, retirement savings and your own wellbeing. Never make such a decision in a hurry. Seek advice.

## Consider using paid help or volunteers

Your family member's house maintenance, such as gardening, lawns or cleaning, can become a problem. Get outside help if you can. Check whether your relative's [Disability Allowance](#) could help them with these costs.

Get *A Guide for Carers* for information about sources of funding and support and how to access it. See [the Guide online](#)

Or, request a free print copy of the *Guide* by phoning 0800 777 797 or emailing [centre@carers.net.nz](mailto:centre@carers.net.nz)

*"I enjoy my job but now Mum needs more of my help. I can't afford to retire early, and it doesn't feel right to ask Mum to pay me to care for her. What are our options?"*

..... **Moeroa, 57** .....



## Share your feelings when you need to

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Talking to a close friend, trusted family member, a counsellor, or a family worker can help to relieve tensions if these are building up.

It's not unusual at times to feel frustrated, worried, anxious, or overwhelmed. Such reactions are common for carers.



## Is it time to stop?

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**There may come a time when you can no longer provide day to day support for your family member or friend.**

Transitioning to formal care is a common experience and one you should not feel guilty about.

If you can no longer provide the level of support needed, talk to your friend or family member if possible and make this decision together. Include the GP and needs assessor (NASC). Plan this change so it happens as smoothly as possible. If your friend or family

member needs to enter residential care you can look forward to focusing on the quality of your relationship rather than the hands-on care that perhaps you can no longer provide at home.

At Carers New Zealand we know that caring for someone else can take up lots of time, effort and energy. That's because we're carers ourselves!



### HOW WE CAN HELP...

- **join our nationwide network of carers** - you're not alone
- **connect with other carers** who 'get it'
- **find information** to help you in your caring role
- discover **ways to get extra help**
- **get tips** about looking after yourself and the person you're caring for
- **find websites and social media** that support carers around the world

*connect  
with us!*



TWITTER

@carersnz



FACEBOOK

Search WeCareNZ



FREE PHONE

0800 777 797



EMAIL US

centre@carers.net.nz



WEBSITE

www.carers.net.nz



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