

feature

OVERWHELMED? IN A DARK SPACE?

Need support to cope?

Life can be challenging, but for some of us, our mental health can be seriously affected. If this sounds like you, you're not alone.

By Tricia Hendry



Those with health issues and family carers don't have to face overwhelming or dark times without help or support.

TALK HONESTLY TO SOMEONE

In times of stress, when thoughts or feelings get intense, finding someone to talk to can help.

Who could you talk to?

- ✓ People you are close to and trust, such as whānau, family or friends
- ✓ Others you know facing similar concerns
- ✓ Carers NZ – call 0800 777 797 weekdays or email us at centre@carers.net.nz
- ✓ Your local doctor or nurse
- ✓ A counsellor or psychologist
- ✓ A local family-whānau support service worker
- ✓ A cultural or spiritual elder
- ✓ A helpline

Not everyone will understand. If the first person you talk to makes you feel worse, try talking to someone else.

How could you start off a conversation?

"There's something I need some help with right now. Have you got a minute to listen?"

"I've been getting way too stressed lately. How do you cope when you're really anxious?"

"I haven't been feeling myself lately. I'm pretty low and angry most of the time. Where do you think I could get some support?"

"SOMEONE REALLY LISTENING TO ME MADE A BIG DIFFERENCE. I'D NEVER BEFORE TOLD ANYONE HOW HARD THINGS HAD GOT."

– MARI

"THINGS WERE BECOMING UNMANAGEABLE, BUT I HAD TO KEEP GOING. THEN ONE DAY I COULDN'T. I HAD TO STOP PRETENDING I WAS COPING. THE LIGHT HAD GONE OUT."

– ANNE

Free support helplines available day and night, 7 days a week

These all offer trained counsellors or support workers to talk to confidentially and without judgement.

1737 Need to talk? Free call or text 1737

Lifeline 0800 543 354 (0800 LIFELINE) or free text 4357 (HELP)

Samaritans 0800 726 666

The Depression Helpline 0800 111 757 or free text 4202

Youthline 0800 376 633

Healthline 0800 611 116 – for advice from experienced health staff

The Alcohol Drug Helpline 0800 787 797

Suicide Crisis Helpline – 0508 828 865 (0508 TAUTOKO)

Download the Mental Health Foundation's comprehensive resource, *Helplines and Local Mental Health Services*, at mentalhealth.org.nz/helplines

SEEKING HELP MAKES SENSE

We often find it hard to ask for or accept help. We usually expect a lot of ourselves, but letting others support us through difficult times can help improve our mental wellbeing – especially if we feel overwhelmed and out of balance.

Carers NZ's Helpline can provide both a listening ear and information about your local help and support options, including some you may not have thought of.

- ✓ Call us on 0800 777 797 weekdays for confidential support or email centre@carers.net.nz
- ✓ We also provide a hub of practical carer support resources and tools at our website at carers.net.nz including ideas for prioritising self-care and dealing with stress and burnout.

A NZ Guide for Carers outlines government help family carers can access and also deals with other matters relating to carers. Getting support to sort out practical issues can help to reduce the pressures carers can feel.

"I BEGAN TO SEE THAT CARING FOR MYSELF WAS CARING FOR MY SON AND IT WAS TIME TO GET SOME HELP FOR ME. THANK GOODNESS I DIDN'T PUT IT OFF ANY LONGER. IT WAS A RELIEF WHEN THE LIGHT CAME BACK ON."

– JANINE

CRISIS POINT?

Your mental health may have got to the point where most days seem overwhelming and too much to handle. You may be experiencing high anxiety or increased irritability and anger. You may be exhausted and feeling flat and unable to enjoy things. Perhaps you're finding it hard to sleep. You might have negative thoughts or feelings that keep coming at you. If you live with a mental health condition, it may have worsened. You might even experience some thoughts about suicide.

Take action to get help

- ✓ Visit your doctor as soon as possible. Be honest with them and ask for assistance.
- ✓ Consider talking with a counsellor or psychologist.
- ✓ If you are registered with a local mental health service, contact them for an appointment. If it's urgent, say so.

For help to find a GP, a counsellor or psychologist, or local community mental health services, visit the Mental Health Foundation website, mentalhealth.org.nz

"I DIDN'T BELIEVE I COULD GET OUT OF THE HOLE I'D FALLEN INTO, BUT I HAVE. IT TOOK TIME, BUT NOW I COPE MUCH BETTER. I'M USING SOME NEW STRATEGIES AND THEY'RE KEEPING ME WELL. I'M STILL MY WIFE'S PRIMARY CARER, BUT I SHARE THE LOAD MORE."

– JASON



IF YOU ARE AT IMMEDIATE RISK OF HARMING YOURSELF OR OTHERS

If you're having thoughts of suicide, or possibly of hurting someone else, know that you can get through this intense time. Focus on coping for one minute, one hour or one day at a time and find some urgent support to keep safe.

Reach out now to someone you trust, or perhaps call a helpline. Tell them you need their assistance to get immediate help. Avoid being alone at this crisis time.

Contact emergency services on 111. Be direct about what you're experiencing. Ask for urgent mental health assistance to keep you safe, or ask someone to call them on your behalf.

Or, go directly to your local health emergency department or medical centre. Take someone with you, if possible. Or contact your local mental health crisis service, which can arrange to make contact urgently.

You might like to also check out our article *We Are Not Machines*. It provides practical information for carers about preventing and managing high stress and burnout. You'll find this article at carers.net.nz or phone 0800 777 797 to ask for it to be sent to you. 