

time out

Ideas to help family, whānau and aiga carers
get the breaks they need

*What can I do
today for me?*

*What did I do
today for me?*



Foreword

As a family or whānau carer, you'll know how important it is to find time for yourself to rest, for wellbeing, and to replenish your energy. But finding this time isn't always easy.

We have developed *Time Out* to help carers proactively plan and organise respite breaks. While we hope you find the ideas in this resource useful, we realise that it won't have answers for every carer. Respite is as individual as carers themselves, the needs of those they support, and other life circumstances.

But it's a good start, one we intend to build on: soon we'll be adding a new section to help carers learn about respite funding and service options.

Meanwhile, most of the advice in *Time Out* has been provided by carers, many of whom have been providing support for loved ones for many years. Their feedback, taken from hundreds of carer responses to our 2014 respite survey, reflects the diversity of caring across age groups, support situations, cultures, and locations.

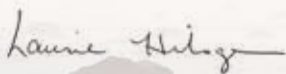
The common thread in survey responses from carers is that breaks don't plan themselves. All carers need to take respite opportunities as they arise, while planning for others. As one carer commented: "*Plan, plan, plan, and then be prepared for change!*"

We hope *Time Out*, with its suggestions from other carers, encourages you to plan the breaks you need and make sure they happen!

We think this resource will start a conversation, and would love to hear about the respite challenges you face and the solutions (or partial solutions!) you have found. Please send us your ideas and stories, which will be shared with carers at our website and in future editions of this guide.

Carers NZ thanks ACC, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Social Development, and other government agencies for helping us to develop this practical advisory resource. We also thank Michael Metzger, a carer and information designer who developed the Government's popular *Guide for Carers*, and spent many hours reviewing feedback from family carers to bring you *Time Out*.

With very best wishes,



Laurie Hilsgen
Chief executive

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“It took a long time for me to realise that I needed breaks.”





Respite is Important!

What is respite?

For many the term 'respite' has a very specific meaning. It has strong associations with government-funded in-home or residential care designed to provide breaks for those in a caring role.

This is, of course, an aspect of respite, but the word has a broader meaning too.

Respite can be as simple as taking time out or having a break from your responsibilities as carer: a few minutes snatched here and there during the day, an hour or two each week, or a longer planned break.

Respite is an individual thing. What counts as time out

for you (say, time in the garden) someone else might find an unwelcome chore. So really it's about choice. Respite is time spent the way you choose to spend it. It can be time spent at home or away from home, by yourself or with another person.

Respite is anything that makes you feel energised, refreshed, and ready to step back into your caring role.



"Don't just talk or think about having breaks, which is what I do ... be proactive, get out the calendar!"



Why respite matters

You're probably used to looking at life in terms of the needs of the person or people you support. So let's start with the reasons why your taking a break is important to them.



“Find time for yourself. Even if it's having a bath, reading a book or making yourself a cup of tea.”

Having a break away from you can benefit their health and wellbeing.

It can encourage independence, build self-esteem, and provide a broader range of social interactions. When you get back together again, you'll have different things to talk about. If you support an adult family member or friend, they may feel concerned that they need your help. If you take a break, it may help them overcome any sense of guilt they may feel.

Now, what about the risks to you? Most long-time carers will tell you that your own health and wellbeing will suffer without adequate breaks.

Always putting others first can see you become isolated socially and lead to feelings of resentment and unhappiness. It can also see you neglect your own health needs, including postponing regular health checks or not having them at all. Many family and whānau carers experience depression. Take time to learn and recognise the symptoms (see page 25) and see your doctor if you're unwell or not coping with your caring situation as well as you used to.

There are serious risks associated with carers becoming exhausted and overwhelmed.

Compassion fatigue and carer 'burnout' is an all too real phenomenon. The wellbeing of the person you support depends on your being fit and able to care – physically and mentally. Caring can be a tough job, especially over the long term, and taking the breaks you need will help you continue to care well.

Making it happen

Respite doesn't just happen. You need to plan for it – or at least be ready to take the opportunity when it arises. A positive respite plan requires motivation, inspiration, and calculation. Ask yourself these questions:



Why should I take breaks? If I don't, why don't I take them?

Motivation

What could I do that would make me feel energised and refreshed?

Inspiration

Can I plan better to get the breaks I need?

Calculation

Think of these pages as a starting point. Take inspiration from the experiences of others. Learn to take a broader view of respite – as 'looking after myself' rather than just 'time away'. Different things

work for different people, but your respite plan is likely to be a combination of short and longer breaks: a few moments, a few hours, a few days, perhaps a few weeks; the time you need to rest and rejuvenate.

Do you support someone who is a family or whānau carer?

We hope this resource offers insights that will help friends, families, whānau and aiga understand how important it is for those in caring roles to have regular breaks. If someone you care about is in a

caring situation, you can help by talking about respite with them. Remind them that they don't have to do everything themselves. Encourage them to ask for help and offer whatever support you can.



"I get up early for a walk by myself while my partner is still home to care for our daughter before he goes to work. These daily breaks are great for my physical and mental health."

Overcoming obstacles

Sometimes it seems that for every reason why taking breaks is a good idea, there's a reason why it's just too hard. The first step to looking after yourself is overcoming the barriers to taking time out. It's not easy and, unfortunately, it's something you have to work out for yourself. But it is possible. It may help to reflect on comments from other carers.

Here's what you said about respite.

Let others help

"I feel too guilty at times. But I have learnt to trust others with caring for the people I love. Remember, if you don't look after yourself how are you supposed to look after others?"

"It's easy to say just do it, but I know how hard that is. If you have family who can help, encourage them to be able to support your person without you having to ask. You need to let them do it."

Be prepared for little things to go wrong

"I know I need to let go and have proper respite breaks but this is so hard: what if something goes wrong, what if all my attention to keeping my partner well is undone by an indifferent respite provider? It's hard to trust in others but I know the time has come to plan proper breaks for at least a week at a time, so I can catch up with friends and

family ... potter around the house ... feel 'free' from constant support needs which are exhausting. Others have encouraged me for years to take regular breaks, but such decisions are up to us carers ... we have to care enough about ourselves to follow through and arrange the breaks we need, even if things might not go perfectly."

Discuss any concerns but don't put off regular breaks

"Communication with my husband is important. I let him know how I feel and he understands the need for me to have time out every now and then. He also has a break when needed. I make sure I go away once a year by myself or with friends."

"My mother refuses to go into a home unless we go away. Having a proper break is important. I try to organise extra respite time after holidays away so I can relax at home and have things organised for when Mum comes home."

"Be patient. At first I could only take an hour away from home at a time. Now it is 2-3 hours."

"You have to put yourself first sometimes and organise the breaks even if you feel selfish. Otherwise you may suffer burnout, then you're no help to anyone."

Find time – even on the busiest day

“Anyone can find five minutes for a walk in the garden or some other little activity that gives pleasure. We carers need to find this time wherever we can; if you do it consciously you will be surprised how many mini breaks you can have in a day.”

“Respite is extremely important. I need it to prevent myself from going insane! I try to take small breaks whenever I can, whether it’s a small sleep-in on the weekend when my partner is home, or walking the dog. Every little bit helps to restore my sense of equilibrium.”

Make ‘me time’ a priority

“Carers need to find something they want to do and commit to it – a festival, a tourist attraction, a wedding, etc.”



Look for inexpensive options

“Book cheap flights or deals on social media like GrabOne or GroupOn.”

“Sometimes I have a ‘staycation’: I buy treats, rent movies, organise a special lunch with friends, or redecorate my bedroom. You don’t always have to spend a fortune to have time out if you think outside the square.”

“I ask my whānau not to buy birthday or Christmas gifts, but we have a shared bank account they deposit money into, and I save

what I can to add to it. It is amazing how it adds up and this allows me to go away to see friends or to attend a concert several times a year.”

“My sister’s employer has a cheap holiday home near the forest which allows us to spend a few days together without worrying about money. It’s in a beautiful location and she does all of the cooking, and cares for me! I really appreciate her thoughtfulness and those special times we spend together.”



FURTHER READING

You might find these articles helpful when thinking about respite:

[Planning for the ‘what ifs’](#)

[Give yourself a break](#)



“The person I care for likes growing vegetables, so taking time out to garden is pleasurable for us both, and easier to organise than other respite breaks.”

Breaks at Home

Short breaks are often easier to organise and follow through on than longer ones. A few minutes to yourself each day doing something you want to do can make a big difference to how you feel about and manage your caring role.

Make a plan

What are the things that give you pleasure? What would you like to do if you had an hour to spare – or even 15 minutes? Write it down.

Having a plan means you’re more likely to make some time out in your day for you. And when you do find yourself with a few minutes to spare, you’ll be more likely to put it to good use.

Weekly Planner

exercise physical activity Aim for 30 minutes of physical activity each day. Look at your typical daily routine; you may already be getting more exercise than you think (accounting counts!).

other time out What other ‘me time’ can you fit in? A break can be anything that keeps you strong and well – anything that makes you feel good!

WHEN CAN YOU MAKE TIME FOR YOURSELF THIS WEEK?

Get in the habit of asking yourself 2 questions each day

When you get up: What am I going to do today for me?

Before you go to bed: What did I do today for me?

	REGULAR ACTIVITIES	SOMETHING DIFFERENT	REGULAR ACTIVITIES	SOMETHING DIFFERENT	TOTAL MINUTES
M					
T					
W					
Th					
F					
Sa					
Su					
TOTAL ME TIME					

Download copies of this planner at www.carers.net.nz

Take 1, Take 5 Weekly Planner

The Take 1, Take 5 Weekly Planner on page 28 and at www.carers.net.nz is a great place to start. It breaks your ‘me time’ into all-important physical activity and other forms of time out that help you recover and recharge.

Download copies of this planner at www.carers.net.nz

Make it regular

Some carers say they have difficulty negotiating even short periods of time out with the person they support. This can take the shine off anticipating respite breaks and makes it difficult to plan them. A regular commitment can be easier to navigate. Make Monday your bridge night or Wednesday morning the day you meet a friend for coffee. Regular appointments will help the person you support to plan their week too!

"It's easier to change your routine than theirs, so if possible wake early to have some 'me' time or stay up late, whichever suits."

Grab the moment

Don't feel you have to entertain someone who pops in to visit the person you support. Head out to the garden instead. Unexpected time to yourself is a gift. Take the break. Don't spend it cleaning windows (unless, of course, you happen to like cleaning windows).

"Instead of focusing on catching up on jobs, remember to fit in some time for yourself. I'm still learning this one!"

Check out activity programmes

The person you support may benefit from participating in an activity programme which may also provide an opportunity for you to have a break at home.

Community-based activities provide a valuable 'change of scene' for participants, and the chance to enjoy the company of others. Many rest homes, churches, and community groups run day care programmes for older adults. The Ministry of Health funds day services for people with high and complex needs and/or an intellectual disability. (See Useful Links.)



Make the most of longer breaks at home

Make a plan so you make the most of your break time. A sleep-in might be first on the agenda, or you may just want to 'potter'.

Some things might need to be organised in advance, like arranging an outing with a friend or tickets to a play or concert.

"Make sure it really is 'you' time. I used to do the groceries and other shopping for Mum, but then I only had a couple of hours for myself. Taking a full 8 hours for respite does let you have a nap, go out for a meal or coffee, and visit friends."

Take a deep breath and ask for help

Many family and whānau carers find it difficult to ask for help. Try to see it as a strength and not a weakness.

“If you meet someone by chance who is understanding and interacts well with the person you are caring for, ask if they could help out. Don't be backward. That is how I have found my best helpers! Also, if you see someone with a support worker or other helper you think seems good, ask if they might have some time to help you.”



Take some time out at carers.net.nz

Treat yourself to a few minutes of 'virtual' respite! The *Respite & Wellbeing* section at our website includes a collection of video and audio resources that are inspirational, educational, or just pure fun.

You'll also find lots of quick break ideas in our Take 1 Minute, Take 5 section: it's easy to find suggestions to match your mood!

www.carers.net.nz/respite-wellbeing

USEFUL LINKS

www.eldernet.co.nz

(search 'day care')

www.health.govt.nz

(search 'community day services')



Breaks Away from Home

While you might be able to grab short breaks ‘on the run’, longer breaks take what may sometimes seem like military-level planning. You may need to dig deep and console yourself with the fact that it will be worth it in the end.

Prepare a respite plan

1

Work out what you need

Get clear about your needs and those of the person you support. Think about duration, frequency and location.

Do you need regular free time, the occasional longer break away, or a combination of both?

What type of respite would work best? There are four typical options:

- Informal help from friends or family/whānau
- Formal care in your own home
- ‘Out of home’ respite at another family member’s or relief carer’s home or at a facility, and
- Community settings or day care, after school, activity-based respite, or holiday recreation programmes.

Think about what skills are required and consider the preferences and abilities of the person you support.

Respite needs to be an enjoyable and worthwhile experience for them, too.

Explore options together if possible.

- What type of environment or relief care would they prefer?
- What about opportunities to widen social networks and have stimulating or fun experiences?
- The needs and wishes of children, especially, may change over time.

2

Find out what's available

Discover what respite support options are available in your community, including sources of funding. Contacting your local Needs Assessment Service Coordination Service (NASC). NASC is the first step to accessing government-funded services, including respite and the Carer Support Subsidy.

- Include the person you support in the decision-making process as much as you can. Make sure they have the opportunity to meet any potential relief carers or services beforehand.
- Visit several potential facilities if you're lucky enough to have a range of choices for out-of-home respite.

- Observe how staff interact with residents.
- Ask as many questions as you need to.
- Discuss your desired goals and outcomes for respite.
- Be specific about any special needs/requirements.
- Follow your instincts.

When arranging in-home relief care, be specific about tasks, skills and schedules. Observe how the potential relief carer(s) interacts with the person you support and follow your instincts as to whether they're a good fit.

You should ensure the relief carer(s) has a current background check if the person being supported is vulnerable or non-verbal.

"Finding the right people/families is key. You have to be able to have confidence that they are going to be safe and happy under someone else's care."

3

Make bookings and put together a back-up plan

Just do it! It can be hard to coordinate the availability of relief care with time off work and making travel arrangements, so strike while the iron is hot any time it appears these things will come into alignment.

Make sure you have a plan in place if something comes up, such as relief care being unavailable at short notice. An unplanned event shouldn't stop you from taking the breaks you need. Keep a list of alternative respite care providers and resources. Potential helpers include family, friends, other carers, faith-based groups, and

support groups. Ask yourself, who could hold the fort for a few hours if something crops up? You don't want to have to rush home if something doesn't quite go according to plan.

If the person you support has been allocated respite and/or the Carer Support Subsidy, don't 'hoard' this time for breaks in case there is an emergency. Plan regular breaks using your Subsidy and respite allocations; should there be an emergency, you will be able to ask for extra help.

"I organise my break around the worker I trust the most and when she is available to stay. I set up other carers I trust and have trained to give my main support worker breaks so she can get out. I encourage her to have her family with her, if she wishes, and to have friends over for dinner while I'm away. To treat it like her home while looking after our daughter."

4

Get organised

Prepare the person you support as much as you can before breaks, especially if it's with a new person or at a new place. Talk about the arrangements together. Try to be calm and cheerful, and be understanding if they are nervous or reluctant. It may be difficult for them to adjust to receiving help from a 'stranger'. It can take time to feel comfortable and build relationships, so give lots of reassurance and encouragement. Other family members, such as siblings, may need reassurance about the arrangement, too.

"A weekend away is great.
I have a couple of people who I can ask a couple of months in advance and then start telling the kids about it. They know them well. The kids need the warning."

Discuss in advance with the relief carer or service any support needs, preferences, or dislikes if the person you support cannot communicate these easily. Provide a written record of routines, medications, dietary requirements, special equipment – anything

you can think of to ensure continuity of support. Include suggestions for handling any difficult behaviours. If a relief carer is coming to your home, you'll also need to include information about running the house – where things are and how things work – as well as a list of emergency contacts.

"I plan with my family. I have every base covered, from providing medication to ambulance contacts to cooking and preparing all meals in advance."

Save and store the information on your computer if you have one so it's easy to add things as you think of them and make changes from one period of respite to another. Or keep a notebook handy!

"Make sure of your residential facility. Write down everything you think they should know about the person they'll be helping, and types of care needed. Try out a facility for a night or two before planning longer visits."



5

Enjoy your respite breaks

The pleasure of anticipation can extend the positive effects of even a relatively short period of respite. You might put something on the fridge to remind you of the break you've planned, so you and the person you support can both look forward to this time for relaxing and new experiences.

You may find it very hard to leave the person you support. Do your best to stay calm, and try not to draw out your goodbyes. Partings may be difficult for both of you for awhile; try to think about the benefits for you and for them.

While you're away, make sure you really switch off and recharge. If the person you support goes to a day centre, after school programme, or other service, at first you may want to visit occasionally so you know what goes on and can talk to staff. But try to fit in with them and not interfere unless you have concerns.

Any substitute helper has to create their own relationships with clients, and this will be more difficult if you're there. It will also be easier for the person you support to adjust to new people or surroundings if you leave them to get on with it. Remember, your respite supporter has your contact details if needed.

6

Review how it went

Once you return from your break, review how things have gone and finetune your plan for next time if necessary. Involve the person you support in the review process if this is possible. Talk to them about the help they received and whether they are content and satisfied. Deal with any worries or problems together.

Remember that others provide help differently from you. This doesn't mean their way is wrong. You need to keep an eye on the help

provided, but try to be open-minded and accept other ways of doing things.

If, having given an arrangement a fair trial, it turns out to be unsuitable, bring it to an end.

Look for an alternative that might work better. Try not to feel defeated and give up.

If something doesn't work, it doesn't mean that you no longer need it, but that you need something different.





Get away for less

Taking a holiday can be doubly challenging when money is tight. You may have to be creative!

If you're quick with a computer mouse, you might be able to get cheap airfares on sites like [Air New Zealand's Grabaseat](#). Talk to your local travel agent, too. Tell them what kind of holiday you'd like and your budget; they'll set up a profile for you and email you when specials are available. You can update your profile and switch email preferences on and off so your email inbox doesn't get swamped.

Another option is to look at holiday destinations within easy driving distance. Is there somewhere close by you've always meant to explore? We live in a beautiful country with a varied landscape where a couple of hours' drive or bus ride can take us to a completely different world.

Accommodation is the biggest cost when travelling. You're likely to find cheaper accommodation if you plan to visit any of our top tourist spots during the 'shoulder' seasons of late autumn and late spring. Self-catering options where you can make simple meals will help keep overall costs down. Keep an eye out for deals on sites like [GrabOne](#) and [Wotif.co.nz](#)

IHC's Respite Programme is a creative option: you get to enjoy a free night away at a hotel while IHC's IDEA Services staff care for the person you support. The programme is available to anyone supporting family members of any age with an intellectual disability. There are participating hotels throughout the country (see Useful Links).

There are other options, too. A number of large employers – ANZ, Air New Zealand, Spark, PSA, New Zealand Post and others – have staff holiday homes, many in some of the country's most popular holiday spots. The rents are very reasonable. You may have a family member who has access to one of these programmes.

Carers NZ also has information about low cost holiday homes and accommodation options and is building a national database of these to share with carers and their families. If you know of a great holiday option other carers might appreciate, please share it with Carers NZ, centre@carers.net.nz

USEFUL LINKS

www.grabaseat.co.nz

www.graboneescapes.co.nz

www.ihc.org.nz (under 'services')

www.wotif.co.nz



Planning for Emergencies’

Like many family, whānau, and aiga carers, you may fret about emergencies and what will happen to the person you support if something happens to you.

What’s your strategy if you get called away, fall ill, or are injured suddenly? What if you die?

Having a plan will give you peace of mind – a kind of mental respite.

Put a written plan in place. We’ve developed some emergency care planning tools to help you. These can be viewed and downloaded at carers.net.nz

Once completed, give copies to at least one other family member or close friend, and/or to your home

support worker or others who should know what to do if you are suddenly unable to continue supporting your family member.

Take the completed tools with you when you travel.

New! We’ve also designed an [Emergency Carer ID Card](#): you may wish to keep a copy of it in your wallet or handbag, or laminate it and attach it to your key ring. If something happens to you while you’re away from home, the card will alert others that the person you support may need help too.

FURTHER READING

You might find our website article helpful:
[Planning for the ‘what ifs’](#)





Taking Care of Yourself

Talk to any carer and they'll tell you they have learned, usually at some cost, how important it is for them to preserve their own physical health and wellbeing. In fact, many family and whānau carers have health or disability needs of their own, are injured while supporting others, and/or experience depression.

"We all begin our caring roles believing we are immortal and that we will be there to do everything all of the time. Reality hits us eventually, and we accept that this is not possible. Our own health suffers, we can become sleep deprived, irritable and (at worst) resentful of our

situation," says Jan Moss from the Complex Care Group, a network of families supporting high needs disabled children and young people.

The following pages are dedicated to looking after your physical and mental wellbeing so you can avoid negative feelings, and continue to do the wonderful job you do.

 *"It's hard, the idea of being separated from someone you love. But it is lovely to sometimes have the house to yourself without helpers coming and going. It is often them I need the break from."* 

USEFUL LINKS

www.complexcaregroup.org.nz

Nutrition

We may not eat as well as we'd like to when we're busy, stressed and on a budget. But we are what we eat, so it's worth the effort it takes to maintain a healthy diet.

Eat carbs for energy

Caring takes energy and carbohydrates are your best source. Carers NZ's fitness guru Wayne Halkyard says you get energy from fat and sugar too, but the boost it gives you is short-lived. Wayne recommends favouring low GI carbs wherever possible. Low GI foods break down slowly so you feel fuller for longer and have energy for more sustained periods. Try porridge or toasted muesli instead of rice bubbles or cornflakes; wholegrain breads instead of white; brown rice instead of white; or kumara instead of potatoes.

Eating little and often is another way to keep your energy levels up.

Everything in moderation

Eating should be a pleasure. Don't feel guilty if you sometimes enjoy a choccy biscuit (or two) with your cuppa, or fish and chips occasionally. Little treats can give you a lift. Just make sure the bulk of your diet is made up of the good stuff. You can't go far wrong if you follow the [Heart Foundation's Healthy Heart Visual Food Guide](#).

Drink plenty of water

Many of us are dehydrated and don't realise it. Try to drink 6-8 glasses of water or other fluids throughout the day. Using a sipper bottle can make it easier to keep tabs on how much you're drinking.

Have meals in reserve

When you can, make more than you need and freeze what you don't eat so you always have a quick meal for you and your family when you have one of those days that gets away from you. Keep the ingredients for a quick pasta or other easy meal in the pantry so you're never stuck if you can't get to the store.



Foods that freeze well

Casseroles (sausage, chicken, lentils etc)
Homemade chicken nuggets
Savoury mince
Chilli con carne
Meatballs
Tomato pasta sauce
Pizza dough
Vege fritters
Soups
Loaves, biscuits and baking
Muffins

Stretch the budget



The food budget is often the first to be trimmed when money is tight. All the usual tips apply when trying to make your budget stretch further. Buy fresh food that's in season (farmers' markets are great for this). Make things from scratch when you can. Plan meals around what's left in the fridge so you don't waste food. Try to shop for a whole week of meals at once and avoid impulse shopping. Explore the world of vegetarian and vegan food – there are some yummy recipes out there that are easy, cheap and nutritious.

Convenience meals

These days there are many frozen, fresh chilled, and other kinds of convenience meals that will allow you to eat well without having to cook. These are available from your supermarket, Google 'frozen meals delivered' to find options in your area, or check your local telephone directory.

FURTHER READING

For meal ideas and articles about nutrition try: [Eat for energy and strength](#)

Rest, relax, sleep

You're not alone if catching up on sleep is high on your wish list. Many family and whānau carers feel the same way.

Make your room sleep friendly

Making small adjustments to your surroundings can help to improve the quality of your sleep. Use blackout blinds to make your bedroom dark and take away all distractions such as TVs and computers.

If you've had your mattress for a long time, it might be worth investing in a new one to help make your bed more comfortable, or you could try a sheepskin or affordable 'pillow top' underlay.

Adjust the temperature in your room so you don't feel too hot or cold.

Sleep with your window open – even just slightly. Fresh air makes a difference.

Get into a routine

Establishing a routine will help you, the person you support, and any others in your household sleep better. Try to go to bed and get up at the same times each day, even at the weekends.

Make time to unwind before you go to bed. Have a warm bath or read a few chapters of your book. Avoiding 'screen time' on computers or other devices for a couple of hours before bedtime might help too.



"I do visualisations. I imagine that I am in a peaceful place on my own. I guess this is meditation. Just a few minutes if I am feeling stressed does lift my spirits. Anyone can find a few minutes to do this in a day."

Calm your mind

Relaxation exercises and meditations may help if an overactive mind is stopping you getting the rest you need. Anna Filliol's [Five Minute Meditation](#) audio series is a good place to start. You might also like to visit the University of Auckland's CALM website, which has relaxation exercises and meditations designed to aid better sleep (see Useful Links below).

Use a 'listening' monitor at night

Sometimes the sleep habits of the person you support can affect getting a good night's sleep yourself. Use a listening monitor if you're worried you won't hear them if they need you during the night. And talk to your doctor if there's a problem like sleep apnoea or snoring; there are aids to help.

Sleep drops and remedies

Ask your chemist about the latest natural products to aid sleep. Carers have told us these work well.

FURTHER READING

Check out these articles:

[Sweet Dreams: ideas for getting a better night's sleep](#)
[Sleep article](#)

USEFUL LINKS

www.calm.auckland.ac.nz

Exercise

We all know physical activity is important for our health and wellbeing, but ‘exercise’ is one of those words that conjures up very different feelings for different people.

You may see it as something enjoyable – relieving tension and stress and making you feel good. Or you may see it as just one more chore to add to an already long list. We’ve provided some ideas to help you get the exercise you’d like or know you need.

Make a plan

Weekly Planner

exercise physical activity Aim for 30 minutes of physical activity each day. Look at your typical daily routine; you may already be getting more exercise than you think (accounting counts!).

other time out What other 'me time' can you fit in? A break can be anything that keeps you strong and well – anything that makes you feel good!

WHEN CAN YOU MAKE TIME FOR YOURSELF THIS WEEK?

Get in the habit of asking yourself 2 questions each day:
 When you get up: What am I going to do today for me?
 Before you go to bed: What did I do today for me?

	REGULAR ACTIVITIES	SOMETHING DIFFERENT	REGULAR ACTIVITIES	SOMETHING DIFFERENT	TOTAL MINUTES
M					
T					
W					
Th					
F					
Sa					
Su					
TOTAL ME TIME					

Download copies of this planner at www.carers.net.nz

You'll move more if you plan for physical activity. Incorporate exercise in your 'me time' plan using our [Take 1, Take 5 Weekly Planner](#). Aim for 30 minutes of physical exercise each day. You might be surprised just how active you are already and that you may just need to step it up a little to get all the exercise you need – an extra walk or two each week, or more time in the garden.

Little and often

Setting aside a block of time regularly can be difficult, so aim to do a little each day. Try [Strength for Life](#), our simple, 15 minute exercise programme developed by national bodybuilder Wayne Halkyard especially for carers. Download Wayne's illustrated one page programme at carers.net.nz

Better together

Make an exercise date with a family member or friend. You can encourage each other, and the social aspect makes the time go faster. It might be easier to try something new – like a yoga or Zumba class – if you go with someone you know. If there's a shared game or activity you enjoy, but you can never find the time, it may help to make a firm commitment to play regularly with the same partner. You'll make an extra effort because you won't want to let them down. It might also make it easier for the person you support to accept your absence if it's a regular thing.

Do what you can

If you are unable to exercise vigorously, do what you can. Every bit of physical activity will contribute to overall wellbeing. For example, try stretching exercises to increase your flexibility. A great place to start is Anna Filliol's [Stretch, Focus and Relax](#) 'watch and learn' series.

You may also be able to include the person you support in your exercise routine, whether it's stretching and strengthening exercises or activities like gardening or going for a walk. Try Ellen van Dijken's ideas for getting active together if you have a child with disabilities (see Further Reading).



FURTHER READING

Check out these articles:

[Child's play: Ways to get active together if your child has disabilities](#)

[Exercise for everyone: Exercise for wheelchair users and people with disabilities](#)

[Time for you: How to get the exercise you need including planning tips](#)

[Guidelines on physical activity for seniors](#)

[Tips on planning for regular physical activity](#)

Self care

Get health and dental checks

A visit to the dentist may not be as high on your wish list as a visit to a day spa, but it's important. And it does mean taking a break to do something for yourself, which makes it a kind of respite. Prevention is better than cure.



"Make sure you take care of yourself too because you don't want to get sick."

So make time to keep on top of your health needs. Visit your doctor each year or two for a Warrant of Fitness – and get your blood pressure, cholesterol and other wellbeing measures checked. Line up for the annual flu vaccination – it's free for many people (check out the ['Fight Flu' website](#)). And look after your teeth. Better to get a regular checkup than to wait until something major (and painful and expensive) crops up. For more ideas read our Wellbeing WOF article.

Quit smoking

The number one thing you can do to improve your health if you smoke is to quit. You're five times more likely to quit successfully if you get help from a service like Quitline. [Visit the website](#) to find out about phone, online and text support. They also offer heavily subsidised smoking cessation aids, including nicotine patches, gum or lozenges.

Care safely

Caring can be hard physically and it's easy to injure yourself, especially if you're supporting someone who has reduced mobility and needs help to move around or adjust their body position. Make sure you keep yourself safe when lifting or moving the person you support. Remember, it's about technique not brute strength. Give yourself a refresher by reading our article about [how to safely lift and transfer](#).

Check your home for safety hazards

'Safe as houses', or so the saying goes – especially if you take steps to prevent injuries at home. See [ACC's checklist at carers.net.nz](#) ACC also has good information about ways to stay safe at home at [its website](#).



"Self care is important, as you are important. Your health and wellbeing is the centre of the household."

USEFUL LINKS

www.acc.co.nz

www.homesafety.co.nz

www.fightflu.co.nz

www.quit.org.nz

FURTHER READING

Wellbeing WOF

[Lifts and transfers](#)

Your relationships

It's easy to get so caught up in our caring role that it can be hard to find energy to maintain our important relationships. That's why having regular breaks is crucial.

Plan your break away

Make sure your respite plan includes time alone with your significant other. When you do get time together, put a limit on how much of that time you spend talking about what's going on at home. Choose an activity, place, or event you both enjoy and can look forward to.



"One on one quality time with my husband is really special. We love getting away anywhere."

Spend time with positive people

Make time for people whose company you enjoy – who make you laugh, who listen, who appreciate how special you are. You give so much of your positive energy to your caring role. Spend as much as time as you can with people who feed that positive energy and help you recharge.

"Spend time with people who make you laugh and are fun to be with."

Find ways to stay in touch

For a whole range of reasons, it's easy to become isolated from your wider circle of family and friends. Embrace technology – especially if you find you're too busy to visit, phone, or email. There are lots of new ways to communicate quickly and easily. Remember other people's special occasions and events. A text says they're in your thoughts as much as a card and it's quicker and cheaper. Facebook is a great way to stay connected, even if you mainly just read posts from friends and family. If you have a smartphone, you can Skype or FaceTime someone and chat while you peel the spuds. If you're not sure what these things are or how they work, grab your

nearest teenager. They know all this stuff! Or you could join [SeniorNet](#), which provides technology learning and social opportunities for older people in many communities.

"I do have a few hours out most weeks meeting with a group of friends. It is a handiwork group. The only commitment is that you must bring something to 'do'. No fees, no commitment. People move in and out during the day in whatever time they have available. We rotate from house to house and have a monthly roster. We take our own lunches so there is no burden – the hostess just provides a very simple morning tea and a cuppa at lunch time. The group has been meeting weekly for over 40 years and it works as well today as when it was set up."

Learn to say yes

Grab offers of help whenever you can. Make sure you 'tag team' if you share your caring role with your partner or other adults in your household, so everyone gets the breaks they need. Sit down and work out a roster for regular time out.

Learn to say no

Your days may be overloaded or you may not be sure what will happen in your household from day to day. Think twice before taking on extra commitments: will you enjoy and take pleasure from what you're being asked to do? Do you have the time or energy to fulfil the request? Or will it add extra stress? If you have agreed to do something and find things change for you (arrangements fall apart, or you don't feel up to following through) put yourself first and cancel. Others will surely understand.

"I love it when someone asks what they can do to help. I always have a 'to do' list on the wall."



Try a Carer MeetUp

Would you like to connect with other carers who live near you for learning, sharing, and fun?

Reach out and find each other by organising a Carer MeetUp! Learn more about this new Carers NZ service trial by downloading our [MeetUps Toolkit](#).



“Our work commitments are often the reason we get away. It’s not always a holiday but it is a lovely change of scenery if our schedules allow us to go together.”

USEFUL LINKS

www.facebook.com

Stay connected to friends, family, and support networks

www.skype.com

Free internet-based video calls

www.viber.com

Free calling and texting

www.apple.com/nz/ios/facetime/

Free internet-based video calls between iPhones, iPads or Macs

www.seniornet.org.nz

Find your nearest SeniorNet club

Your mental health

No matter how difficult things seem, you can become healthier and happier, and make your relationships with those around you more positive, by learning how to manage your stress levels and emotions. Having regular breaks will help preserve your mental health and protect you from the common problem of carer burnout.

Monitor your feelings

Take a moment from time to time to check in with yourself. How am I doing? What's changed for me? Am I feeling more tired than usual? Am I more short tempered or teary? Do I feel run down? Am I drinking or smoking more? These and other things like frequent headaches, difficulty sleeping and withdrawing from social interaction and activities you used to enjoy are warning signs of stress and depression.

"Try to stop and listen to your own thoughts. I'm usually too busy organising/working to relax. It's hard to feel like I can justify time for me - so it's helpful to be reminded that I have needs and rights too."

Help and support for depression

If you feel you're not coping, reach out. Depression is a medical condition experienced by many family and whānau carers. Talk to your doctor if you feel you're not coping. There are many other sources of help and support too. The Depression Helpline is available 24/7. You can speak to a trained counsellor who can talk through your situation and find you the right support. The Freephone number to call is 0800 111 757. You'll find information to help you recognise depression, find a way through and stay well at www.depression.org.nz Resources include The Journal – where John Kirwan and a range of experts guide you through a six-step self-help programme. Feedback from carers who have tried The Journal has been really positive!

Learn to relax

Relaxation doesn't always come naturally, even if you're having a respite break. If you're wound up and stressed, you need to teach yourself to relax. Breathing exercises, meditation and positive self-talk are all proven techniques for calming the mind and managing stress. (See 'Relaxation and meditation' on page 27.)

"Always laugh. It is the one thing that gets me through."

Be realistic

You're not Superman or Wonder Woman. You're a human being with all the strengths and frailties that entails. You can only do what you can do. Doing your best is good enough. Focus your energy on changing the things you can and learn to live with the things you can't. Reach out when you need support.

"Ask for help when you need it, even if it's just calling someone that you work with to have another person listen to how you feel. Don't wait too long to ask for help so the pressure does not get too much."

Take the breaks you need

You're no good to anyone if you allow yourself to burn out. Compassion fatigue puts people at risk from those who support them. Sustained periods where you feel 'at the end of your tether' are a danger zone. You're not only risking your own health and wellbeing, but that of the person or people you support.

Reach out if you're not coping: talk to friends and whānau, phone the Depression Helpline, or check out The Journal online!

www.depression.org.nz
0800 111 757

FURTHER READING

You'll find these articles at
carers.net.nz
[Carer burnout](#)
[Learning to let go](#)

[Life coach – good vibrations](#)
[Managing fear and worry](#)
[Self-belief](#)
[Valuing yourself and your caring role](#)
[Wind down and recharge](#)

USEFUL LINKS

www.helpguide.org (search 'Emotional Intelligence Toolkit')
www.relationships.org.nz Advice and services from Relationships Aotearoa

Equipment and technology

Anything that saves you time or makes caring easier or safer is a good thing. A lot of equipment and technology is funded depending on your circumstances and some relatively inexpensive items can make a big difference.

Monitors and sensors

A 'listening' monitor can be useful during the day as well as at night. You can use it while you spend time in the garden, hobby room, or anywhere else nearby. That way, you can relax knowing you will be able to hear if the person you support needs you.

There are a range of sensors available to help you care at home. Bupa, for example, has a bed occupancy sensor that goes underneath the mattress. It will alert you if the person you support has, say, got up during the night for a bathroom visit and hasn't returned to bed after the usual length of time.

Medical alarms

These one button wonders will alert the alarm call centre or ambulance service if someone becomes unwell, falls, or has another kind of emergency. Alarms are an affordable way to ensure help will be on its way if needed. Funding may be available from [Work and Income](#).

Click and the shopping's done

Shopping can be as much a chore as a pleasure. Online shopping is an efficient way to buy what you need for home delivery. Many companies offer online shopping as well as having 'bricks and mortar' stores, so it's easy to buy from brands you know

and trust. Look for online-only specials and offers of free delivery to keep costs down. Home deliveries are especially useful for groceries, pet and garden supplies, and frozen or pre-prepared meals. Think about the things you buy regularly and consider whether ordering them online for home delivery would make life easier. If you like to shop this way, ask friends and family for special occasion gift vouchers from these e-tailers.

Use a taxi card

Getting from A to B can be stressful for family and whānau carers and those they support, especially if it requires shifting, lifting, and finding a disability carpark. Ask yourself whether, sometimes at least, it might be prudent to use a friendly, accessible taxi or companion driving service for appointments and outings. Reducing such stresses is a break in itself; the person you support may even qualify for reduced taxi fares with the [Total Mobility Scheme](#).

Taxi companies like [Blue Bubble](#) and [Corporate Cabs](#) offer accounts for those who use taxis regularly. You'll find information on their websites, or you may know of other transport operators in your area that offer accessible vehicles for outings. With a taxi card you can make a single payment monthly, for example, and request drivers and vehicles you prefer by booking ahead.

TOOLS TO MAKE CARING EASIER



USEFUL LINKS

www.bluebubbletaxi.co.nz
www.corporatecabs.co.nz
www.drivingmissdaisy.co.nz

www.bupa.co.nz
www.nzta.govt.nz (search 'total mobility scheme')
www.workandincome.govt.nz (search 'medical alarms')

Whats available through Government

Here are key links to online government information and resources for family/whānau carers about respite and taking a break.

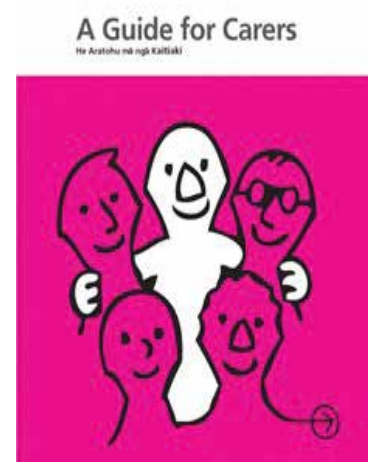
General information on respite funded by Government

The Ministry of Social Development website has a downloadable *A Guide for Carers* that has general information and an overview on respite services for:

- Younger people with an intellectual, sensory and/or physical disability (generally under 65 years) funded by the Ministry of Health
- Older people over 65 years or people 50-64 years who have age related needs, funded by District Health Boards
- People with disabilities caused by chronic health conditions, funded by District Health Boards
- People with mental health, alcohol or other drug issues, funded by District Health Boards

A flyer (in English, Māori, Samoan, Tongan, Cook Island Māori, Simplified Chinese, Traditional Chinese, Niuean, Korean, Hindi, Farsi and Arabic and containing information based on the full resource *A Guide for Carers*) is also downloadable from the Ministry of Social Development's [website](#) (see page 18 of the *Guide*).

The links below give you more detailed information about respite services funded by the Ministry of Health and District Health Boards.



RESPITE FOR CARERS OF DISABLED PEOPLE UNDER 65 YEARS

The Ministry of Health is moving towards ensuring more flexible respite options are available to give disabled people and their families and carers more choice and control when accessing respite care.

General respite information

The Ministry of Health website provides general information about respite including what to expect from a respite service, and links to related areas such as Needs Assessment and Service Coordination services. It includes a downloadable brochure in English, Māori, Cook Island Māori, Samoan and Tongan.

General information on Carer Support

This Ministry of Health web page has general information about the Carer Support Subsidy and explains who is considered a full-time carer, and how to get and use Carer Support. It includes a brochure about Carer Support in English, Māori, Cook Island Māori, Samoan and Tongan.

General Needs Assessment and Service Coordination information

The Needs Assessment and Service Coordination service is responsible for assessing disability need and coordinating appropriate services. For general information about the service and contact details go to the following link. A fact sheet in English and Māori is available. See these links for:

[Services](#)

[Coordination agencies contact details](#)

Individualised funding

[Individualised Funding \(IF\)](#) is a way of paying for Home and Community Support Services which lets you directly manage the resources you've been allocated for disability supports.

General disability support service information

For more general information and an overview on the range of services to support people with disabilities – and the people who care for them – go to the following [Ministry of Health](#)

[Disability Support Services web page.](#)

This [link](#) provides a fact sheet on where to lodge a complaint about Ministry of Health-funded disability support services.

RESPITE FOR CARERS OF OLDER PEOPLE AGED 65+

Support for carers of people over 65 years is provided through District Health Board Needs Assessment and Service Coordination services.

Needs Assessment and Support Services for Older People: What you need to know

This is a booklet that provides information to older people and their families and whānau on how to access needs assessment and home support services. [The booklet is available online](#), or a hard copy can be ordered.

Individual Needs Assessment and Support Services for older people: contact list

Web pages on the [Ministry of Health website](#) contain the names and contact numbers for District Health Board Needs Assessment and Service Coordinator services; these services allocate District Health Board-funded support services for older people.

Eldernet

A link to a search engine where you can search by District Health Board for residential respite and carer support short stay services.

See [Eldernet's website](#) for more information.

RESPITE FOR CARERS OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES CAUSED BY CHRONIC HEALTH CONDITIONS

Respite services for carers and families caring for a person with disabilities caused by chronic health conditions are funded by District Health Boards.

You will need to contact your local District Health Board's

Needs Assessment and Service Coordination agency.

More information is available at the [Ministry of Health's website](#).

RESPITE FOR CARERS OF PEOPLE WITH A MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION OR ADDICTION

Respite services for carers and families caring for a person with a mental health condition or addiction are funded by individual District Health Boards, and policies and services vary from DHB to DHB.

This [link](#) will lead you to the [mental health and addiction contact](#) at your local District Health Board.

Needs Assessment and Service

Coordinator services also vary from area to area. Not all local Needs Assessors provide respite for mental health. Learn more by contacting your local

Needs Assessment and Service Coordinator, which you will find in this link at the [Ministry of Health's website](#).

RESPITE FOR PAID CARERS OF PEOPLE WITH INJURIES COVERED BY ACC (ACCIDENT COMPENSATION COMMISSION)

Regular respite care is encouraged if an ACC client's usual paid caregiver is a family member / whānau. ACC considers clients' needs over 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and accepts periods of respite may be needed - especially when family members / whānau are providing the bulk of paid care and support.

There is no limit on the amount of respite available. However, it is not funded as a separate entitlement. The amount of respite

is determined by advice from the Support Needs Assessment and other information gathered to assist with assessing respite needs.

To discuss respite care options, contact your ACC case owner or call 0800 101 996.

OTHER PEOPLE WHO MAY HELP YOU ACCESS RESPITE ARE:

- Your General Practitioner.
 - Your local District Health Board mental health service case manager.
-

Planning tools and resources



RESOURCES

A Guide for Carers

This popular resource describes government supports and services for carers. You can download [A Guide for Carers](#) from our website or contact us and we'll send you one.

Carer MeetUps

A MeetUp could be as simple as an informal get together with other carers at a café, or a more formal gathering at a church hall or community space with a speaker, catering, etc. You can host a MeetUp yourself or find one that's being organised in your community. Our [Toolkit](#) makes it easy for anyone to organise and promote a MeetUp.

Emergency planning tools

Our tools are designed for family, whānau and aiga carers who provide regular or 24 hour support for a family member or friend who has a disability or health condition. If you become ill or die suddenly,

having an emergency plan in place will ensure uninterrupted care for the person you support. Our tools include:

- [Emergency Care Plan](#)
- [Emergency Carer ID Card](#)
- [Medications Care Plan](#)
- [Important Papers Checklist](#)

Relaxation and meditation

Follow along with Anna Filliol's [Stretch, Focus and Relax](#) series, developed especially for carers. Each segment in the series runs for 10 to 15 minutes and caters for all abilities, including seated exercise options for those who can't easily stretch or move standing up.

Strength for Life

Feeling a bit rundown? You may enjoy our free 15 minute exercise programme, developed by national bodybuilding champion Wayne Halkyard to help build and maintain the strength carers need to feel better, increase their overall strength and fitness, and perform their role safely. Done regularly, the routine can build strength fast. Carers say it really works! To request a stretchy band to do the exercises, phone the Carers NZ's national resource centre, 0800

777 797 (we ask for a \$5 koha), or buy one at a retail outlet. Some people use inexpensive bungy cords as an alternative to a band. You can download the one page programme [from our website](#).

Take 1 Minute, Take 5 Planner

[Our Take 1, Take 5 Weekly Planner](#) is a tool to help you organise regular breaks each week – and make sure you take them. The planner is printed on page 28 or you can download it from our [website](#). Update it from week to week!

Webinars

Check our [website](#) regularly for our latest ideas about respite, wellbeing, and other important caring topics. You can also share with other carers for learning and support.

YouTube

Search 'Carers NZ' on www.youtube.com for a range of videos about Carers NZ and caring at home. You'll also find links to the [Stretch, Focus and Relax](#) video series, [Strength for Life](#) 15 minute exercise programme for carers, and other practical learning for carers.



Weekly Planner

WHEN CAN
YOU MAKE TIME
FOR YOURSELF
THIS WEEK?

Get in the habit of asking yourself 2 questions each day

When you get up:

What am I going to do today for me?

Before you go to bed:





What did I do today for me?

*exercise
physical activity*

Aim for 30 minutes of physical activity each day.
Look at your typical daily routines; you may already
be getting more exercise than you think (vacuuming
counts!)

*other
time out*

What other 'me time' can you fit in? A break
can be anything that keeps you strong and
well – anything that makes you feel good!

	REGULAR ACTIVITIES 	SOMETHING DIFFERENT 	REGULAR ACTIVITIES 	SOMETHING DIFFERENT 	TOTAL MINUTES
M					
T					
W					
Th					
F					
Sa					
Su					
TOTAL ME TIME					

TRY OUR RESPITE IDEAS AND 'MINI BREAKS' TO SUIT
YOUR MOOD WITH TAKE 1 MINUTE, TAKE 5 AT:

carers.net.nz

