



Sunderland Carers Centre Guide To: Young Carers Wellbeing

It can be easy to get lost in your caring role, forgetting to look after yourself but your wellbeing matters!

Mental and emotional wellbeing

Mental wellbeing is how you are feeling and how you are coping with daily life. It is normal for our emotions to change between feeling good and happy to feeling angry or low or to even have lots of feelings at once, but if we feel low for a long time, life seems to be harder.

It is important to look after your mental wellbeing because having good wellbeing can help you to:

- Cope with everyday life
- Cope with stress and changes
- Make decision
- Understand and cope with a range of emotions
- Boost confidence and self-esteem
- Build relationships
- Build and develop life skills
- Enjoy the things in your life

How can I look after my mental wellbeing?

Take breaks: Take regular steps back and make time each day to have some “me time”. It can make a big difference taking time for yourself to do the things you enjoy.

Connect with others: Whether you talk to your friends, a trusted adult, join a support group or reach out to other carers, talking about your experience can make it feel less overwhelming.

Ask for help: You are not alone! Getting help can lighten the load, whether it’s asking a family member for help or reaching out to professional services, you don’t need to do it all alone.

Stay active: Exercises releases feel good hormones which boosts your mood and energy levels. A short walk can help to clear your mind and reduce stress.

Manage stress: It is crucial to find ways that work for you to manage stress. This could be through meditation, hobbies or simply relaxing.

Look out for yourself: To be able to give your all when helping somebody you love, you need to feel well enough. Don't sacrifice your mental health for somebody else's.

Try therapy: You don't have to wait until you are at breaking point, talking to a therapist throughout your caring role can help get some of your worried and concerns out into the open.

Be kind to yourself: Nobody is perfect, you are doing the best you can and that is enough!

Where can I get help and support for my mental wellbeing?

Kooth (age 12+) – a free, safe and anonymous place for young people to find online support <https://www.kooth.com/>

Young Minds – there to help you understand how you are feeling, find ways to feel better or support someone who is struggling
<https://www.youngminds.org.uk/>

Creative Minds – Supporting children (age 4+), young people, adults and families
<https://www.creativemindsnsc.com/>

GP – your GP can support you with your mental health and a referral for further support if needed.

Mind – a range of advice and resources to support your mental health
<https://www.mind.org.uk/for-young-people/>

Sunderland Culture – provide a range of creative activities and groups
<https://www.sunderlandculture.org.uk/learn-create/young-people/>

Physical wellbeing

Physical wellbeing is how well your body functions and feels. Research suggest that young carers typically report poorer physical wellbeing than their peers who do not have a caring role. Several factors can influence your physical wellbeing including physical activity, nutrition, rest and stress.

What are the signs of poor physical wellbeing?

- Fatigue
- Headaches
- Muscle tension
- Sleep disturbances
- Increased heartrate
- Digestive problems
- Mood swings and irritability
- Frequent illness
- Skin issues

How can I improve my physical wellbeing?

Physical activity: making time to exercise on a regular basis, even just a short walk each day, can help to keep your heart, muscles and bones strong. Stretching your body also helps to improve flexibility, reduce muscle tension and boost your mood, which can be easily added into your daily routine.

Sleep: you may have heard the term “sleep hygiene” which means healthy habits, behaviours and environmental factors that can help you get a good night’s sleep. This includes following a bedtime routine, going to bed at the same time each night, keeping your bedroom, cool, dark, calm and screen free and no screens at least 1 hour before bed. The NHS has lots of information on how to fall asleep faster and sleep better:

<https://www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/mental-wellbeing-tips/how-to-fall-asleep-faster-and-sleep-better/>

Make time to de-stress: Whether it’s using mindfulness, meditation, going for a walk or participating in a hobby, dedicating time to de-stress can boost your physical wellbeing.

Eat a healthy, balanced diet: ensuring your body gets the nutrients it needs from a range of foods helps to keep it healthy. The NHS has lots of information in their Eatwell Guide:

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/food-guidelines-and-food-labels/the-eatwell-guide/>

Stay hydrated: our bodies are made up of about 60% of water so staying hydrated is vital. Being hydrated benefits your skin, digestive system and supports overall bodily functions. Signs of dehydration include feeling thirsty,

dark yellow, strong smelling wee, weeing less often, feeling dizzy or lightheaded, feeling tired, dry mouth lips and tongue and sunken eyes.

Getting sunshine and fresh air: Getting outside and connecting with nature can improve physical and mental wellbeing. 15 minutes of sunshine boosts Vitamin D levels and fresh air helps to clear the mind.

Challenge your mind: Puzzles like sudoku, crosswords, reading or learning a new hobby can boost cognitive function and keep your mind sharp.

Rest your body: Taking time to rest during the day, especially if you have been doing lots of physical activity, is vital as pushing too hard can lead to exhaustion, burnout and physical strain.

Practice mindfulness: being present in the moment can help you to relax and boost your physical and mental wellbeing.

Where can I get support to support my physical health?

Everyone Active - If you are an unpaid carer and the person you are supporting lives in the City of Sunderland, Sunderland Carers Centre can offer you a free swimming pass. Please contact us to complete an application.

Active Families NE – They work across the North East of England, delivering accessible health & well-being activities for all ages. They also work in partnership with Together For Children to deliver holiday programs.

<https://www.activefamiliesne.co.uk/>

GP – Your GP can support you with your physical health and wellbeing, making referrals for further support if needed