

Checklist and plan for moving forward

Many people who have cared for someone who has passed away find it hard to adjust to a life without the role of caring. Sometimes, they find it hard to consider life without the person they cared for. Other times they have been caring for so long that life without the caring role feels empty. Many feel that the grief is so intense that they want to be alone. All of those feelings are very normal. Grief can take a long time to process and it is normal for you to feel like a different person in some ways following your experience as a carer and the loss of your partner, relative or friend. Be patient with yourself and allow yourself time to grieve.

Some bereaved carers can have ongoing emotional and physical health problems as a result of their caring experience. Being a bereaved carer, increases your risk of developing serious illness. Therefore it is important that you make a plan to look after yourself and also develop a plan for moving forward with your own life, even if it is moving very slowly. We know that having strong social connections and having some form of meaning or vocation can both have a positive impact on your mental and physical health.

This Checklist and Plan for Moving Forward has been developed for you to complete in the months following the passing of your partner, relative or friend. We do not recommend you use it in the early weeks following the passing. Its purpose is to help you think about your own health during this difficult time.

We have made a number of suggestions for ways you could look after yourself during this time. Tick the boxes of suggestions that you could try in the coming weeks.

My physical health

- Try getting more sleep by going to bed earlier
- Reduce your intake of caffeine, alcohol or non-prescribed medication
- Eat well (increase your intake of fruit and vegetables and fibre)
- Do some gentle exercise (go for a walk, try a yoga class, exercises at home)
- Visit your GP for a check up
- Visit the dentist for a check up

My emotional wellbeing

- Take a moment to check in on how you are feeling, specifically consider your levels of stress, distress, anxiety, depression, grief, and anger
- Make an appointment with your GP or a counsellor to discuss your emotional wellbeing
- Talk with a trusted friend or family member about how you are feeling
- Consider attending a bereavement support group

My social wellbeing

Invite a friend over for a meal

Try and reconnect with a friend you haven't seen for a while

Choose someone who was kind to you when you were caring and call them to thank them

Suggest a family get together

Try and attend a new group, something that you are interested in and where you can meet new people (bridge club, dancing group, lawn bowls, cycling or walking group)

Have a look and see what community events are happening that you could attend

My vocational wellbeing

Find out if there are any opportunities to join a committee or become a volunteer

Sign up for a short course

Find out about classes or groups for any interests or hobbies that you would like to pursue

Call your employer and discuss your options for returning to work

Use the above checklist to make a plan for yourself for the coming weeks which will help you look after yourself, stay healthy, connect socially, and explore new interests.

If things are not improving

You should not expect life to return to exactly the way it was before caring. Things have changed. You have changed. However, you should feel like you are moving forward and taking small steps towards making a life for yourself.

If it has been many months since the passing of your partner, relative, or friend, and you don't feel like you are moving forward in any way, contact your GP or other health professional. Some people do develop a more complicated form of grief that does need specialist support. See our resources and helplines information sheet in the Carer Library.

CarerHelp is here when you need it.
www.carerhelp.com.au

