

# Carers: Look After Yourself

## Introduction

Although it can be rewarding, caring for someone with Dementia, at times it can also be a challenge and even difficult. There will be happy times, new experiences, new memories to cherish and you can even build new relationships as a result of caring for someone with Dementia. However, there may also be times when you feel guilty, stressed, alone, exhausted, isolated and even depressed. If you are caring for someone with Dementia, it is really important that you look after yourself as well. If you are physically and mentally healthy then you will be able to cope much better with some of the problems you might have. Next are seven of the best tips that we have found for carers.

If you need extra information or help, you can call the Alzheimer's Association National Helpline on 0300 222 1122 or visit one of these websites - [www.alzheimers.org.uk](http://www.alzheimers.org.uk) - [www.dementiauk.org](http://www.dementiauk.org) - [www.norfolkcarerssupport.org](http://www.norfolkcarerssupport.org) or [www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Alzheimers-disease/Pages/Introduction.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Alzheimers-disease/Pages/Introduction.aspx)

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## Seven Top Tips

1. Understand how you feel – it is not unusual to feel bad, frustrated or even angry with the person you are caring for. But it is important to understand why you feel that way. Once you identify the problem and why you feel the way you do, it may be easier to solve – for example you might need extra help to cope or you might need to make different decisions about how you care for that person.
2. Make lists and prioritise – When you can see what you think has to be done you can work out what is really important, what other people can help with and what is not that important after all – this will allow you to still get the important things done, but you might decide to delegate or even not to do the less important ones.
3. Know your limits – you really can't do everything!

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## Seven Top Tips (continued)

4. Talk to someone – there are lots of people that understand the position you are in and can often help. But even just talking about your situation can often help you put things into perspective. Don't worry about people judging you. If you don't feel comfortable talking to your family and friends, there are professionals such as your GP, a counsellor or social worker.
5. Get some help – Don't be embarrassed to ask your friends and / or family for help. They will often be more than happy to support you and the person you care for. There are a number of local voluntary organisations that could help - even your local authority might have some ideas for you. Contact Norfolk Carers Support on 01603 219924 or go to [www.norfolkcarerssupport.org](http://www.norfolkcarerssupport.org).
6. Take a break – taking time for yourself and relaxing will help you and the person you are caring for. Try and arrange it so that you can leave the house and do something you enjoy on a regular basis. And make sure that you stick to your '*you-time*'. For example, meeting friends or family every week, doing a hobby you enjoy or even just taking a regular walk.

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## Seven Top Tips (continued)

7. Don't feel guilty for looking after yourself as well – you must not forget that although the person you care for needs you, if you don't look after yourself, you won't be able to care for them so well.

## Seven little things that can help a lot

- Eat a well-balanced, healthy diet and don't skip meals
- Do some regular (FUN) exercise
- Sleep well – if you can't, talk to your GP
- Have regular health check-ups - don't miss your appointments
- Do something about stress as early as possible
- Don't damage your own health – for example, don't lift anything that is too heavy or trip
- Make sure that you are getting all the support you need and that you are are entitled to.