

Work, study and volunteering

Exploring how wellbeing and balance can be enhanced by education or employment



Do you need to call someone?

Emergency

In an emergency or if someone is in danger

Triple Zero 000

Need to talk?

If you are in crisis, anxious or depressed and want to talk with someone

Lifeline: 13 11 14 – for anyone

Kids Helpline: 1800 55 1800 – for people aged 5 to 25

Carer services

Call the Carer Gateway Contact Centre for support and services:

1800 422 737 – Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm local time

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Except where otherwise indicated, the images in this publication show models and illustrative settings only, and do not necessarily depict actual services, facilities or recipients of services.

This publication may contain images of deceased Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Where the word 'Aboriginal' is used it refers to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Name:

How to use this workbook

In this workbook you will find activities, information, resources and opportunities designed to support the facilitated and self-guided coaching experience. How you use this workbook is entirely up to you. We encourage you to make notes, draw or scribble ideas and thoughts throughout. It is your resource and can be something you refer back to in future.

You can work through this booklet at your own pace. You can choose to explore the content with a coach, with a peer or someone you trust, or by yourself.

Throughout this workbook you will see the following icons:



indicates further information



indicates an activity you can complete



indicates an opportunity to pause for a reflection. You could discuss the idea with a friend or your coach, or you could write down your thoughts in your journal



You can download this workbook in PDF format.
Visit coaching.carergateway.gov.au

It's more than just a job



Jennifer, 21, A.C.T.

My uni has made some allowances for me because of my caring role.

I spoke to the Dean of my faculty about how I look after my mother and how I was worried it would mean I wouldn't meet the attendance requirements for my degree. She was really understanding.



Lou, 47, Vic.

I love using my skills to help young kids develop theirs.

I've learned a lot about how kids develop through caring for my daughter. I love being able to share that knowledge with others.



Denise, 66, Vic.

Getting my hands in the dirt and caring for our garden brings me so much satisfaction.

I love helping out at the community garden. We have so much fun working together. I love working with the team and tending to the plants. It's a very different pace to home.



Caz, 42, S.A.

You learn so much while
you're giving back.

I recommend volunteering to everyone.
The skills I have learned and the ability to
give back to my community are invaluable.
I am really proud of the work we do.



Jayden, 18, Qld.

When I'm at school, I can focus
on me and my future.

School is a break from being needed at
home. It's like it's time just for me. I also
feel happy because I know I am working
towards getting a good job.



Trina, 31, W.A.

I was a bit anxious about going back
to work but it's going really well.

I was so worried I wouldn't be able to
manage working and caring for my brother.
My boss and I have some strategies in
place if I need to leave early or can't work
due to being needed by my brother.



Gino, 68, Tas.

Working part time works for me.

The extra income from my part time job
means that my wife and I aren't always
worried about money. I love talking to the
customers and being part of the team.



How could education or employment enhance wellbeing?

In this coaching session you will explore the links between meaning, purpose and wellbeing. You will consider how studying or being involved in paid or voluntary work might be of benefit for you and how you can balance this with your caring role.

Topics:

- Thinking about what you want from your life,
- Balancing working or studying with a caring role,
- Participating in work, volunteering or study.

By the end of this coaching session, you will be able to;

- Identify some of the skills and knowledge you already have,
- Understand why you might want to work, study or volunteer,
- See how you can make working, studying or volunteering a part of your life.

This workbook contains the following sections:

Page

Introduction to work, study and volunteering	8
Exploration of work, study and volunteering	10
Looking ahead	50

What's important to you?

As you work your way through this course, it can be helpful to keep in mind the things in life that are of the most importance to you. As you explore the topics, questions and activities, consider how your responses are shaped by the values you hold.

On the right is a list of values. The list is by no means complete, and the values included will mean different things to different people.

As you read through the next few sections and reflect on your own experiences, think about how these values might influence your choices and actions.



Read through the list and circle five values that are very important to you.

Hint: Try not to over think it; your first response is enough.

Acceptance	Family	Justice
Accuracy	Flexibility	Knowledge
Belonging	Friendship	Love
Challenge	Fun	Order
Comfort	Growth	Passion
Compassion	Honesty	Respect
Cooperation	Hope	Responsibility
Creativity	Humility	Stability
Dignity	Humour	Tradition
Excitement	Independence	Wealth

The challenges of balance

As carers, our minds are in a constant process of evaluation. We are weighing up priorities, thinking about possible outcomes, wondering what's best, maybe even weighing up whose needs are most urgent.

Trying to find a balance can feel overwhelming.

On the opposite page are some of the dilemmas carers might encounter when thinking about how to balance working or studying with their caring role.

Her need for support is increasing. Should I cut down my work hours?

If I cut down my work hours, we'll have less money to do the things we enjoy.

I want to work but no one else understands how to look after him.

If I go back to work, maybe he will need me less...

I wish I had time to do the things I used to enjoy.

I feel selfish putting my own needs first.

I miss being my own person. Who am I if I'm not caring for her?

I've forgotten who I am and what I want...

I really love my job and going to work gives me a break.

But my caring responsibilities should be my priority.





Finding what works

Most of us have an idea of how we would like our life to be. We might daydream about how we wish things were. We might fantasise and think “If only...”

Many carers feel bad because their day to day life isn't measuring up to how they wish things were. We dream about the magical time when it all works; when everything fits into place and runs smoothly.

Sometimes comparing our reality to our fantasy can lead to feeling stuck or hopeless, or feeling like we've failed when really we are doing a good job.

What if we thought about things differently?

What if we thought about what it would take for us to live a good life?



When you are doing the best you can, with what you have, how does it look? How does it feel?

What supports a good life?

The **CHIME** recovery model (Leamy et al. 2011) is a framework that can help us to understand what underpins a satisfying and meaningful life.

The framework was developed by researchers who wanted to understand the key aspects of personal mental health recovery. They found that throughout published personal accounts of mental health recovery, five things were repeatedly mentioned as crucial for re-establishing and then maintaining mental health. These five aspects can be considered as the cornerstones of any person's wellbeing.



Connection

Contact with peers, good relationships, support from others, being part of the community



Hope

Optimism about the future, believing in health, feeling motivated, positive thinking, having dreams and aspirations



Identity

Having a positive sense of yourself, feeling able to be yourself, dealing with stigma, seeing the whole person



Meaning

Making sense of your experiences, knowing what's important to you, having purpose, understanding your world, feeling valued



Empowerment

Being responsible for your own wellbeing, feeling capable, being able to see your strengths, learning by doing

Strengthening CHIME

When we experience connection, hope, identity, meaning and empowerment in our lives, we are living a 'good life'. It follows then that, if we are looking to increase our sense of wellbeing, strengthening each of the CHIME cornerstones would be an effective approach.

But, we all know that sometimes we forget what it's like to think about ourselves. We have had to overlook our own needs so often that we lose touch with our own wants and needs.



The reflection questions below are intended to get you thinking about where aspects of C.H.I.M.E. already exist in your life or may have existed previously. You might like to consider looking at ways to increase the opportunities to experience these aspects more often.

You might like to share your ideas, thoughts and feelings about this activity with your coach.

What are you doing when you feel the most energised and fulfilled?

When do you know you are valued?

What can you get totally absorbed in?

What skills would you like to develop?

When you were younger, what did you want to be when you grew up?

Avenues to strengthening CHIME

So, how do we find a balance between our own needs, dreams and desires and the responsibilities we have as a carer?

Working outside of your caring role, whether in paid employment or as a volunteer, or learning more about something you're interested in, can be ways you can build connection, hope, identity, meaning and empowerment. There are additional benefits to being involved in working, studying or volunteering too – and they don't need to come at the cost of your caring role or create added stress.

The remainder of this coaching session is divided into three sections covering work, study and volunteering. Each topic is explored from the perspective of a carer and explores the possible benefits and challenges of participation. Each section also includes suggestions and an action plan to help you take a step forward.

At the end of each section, you can return to this page if you'd like to explore the other topics.

Choose an option from the topics listed on the next page to continue.



Work

Go to page 20



Study

Go to page 36



Volunteering

Go to page 42



Working and caring

Whether it's due to financial necessity, the need for intellectual stimulation or simply a chance to have a break from your caring role, there are many reasons why you might combine working and caring.

Juggling the demands of working while in a caring role brings a whole new set of challenges and rewards.

In this section, we will explore the following topics:

- Carers in the workforce,
- Carer experiences of the benefits and challenges of working and caring,
- Disclosing your carer role,
- Your rights at work,
- Returning to work after a break,
- Getting a job – what do I need to consider? What do I need to do?
- You will find lots of links and resources along the way.

Working can provide opportunities to create, build and strengthen all aspects of **CHIME**



Connection

colleagues, customers, community



Hope

financial stability, professional goals



Identity

personal and skill development



Meaning

purpose, creating, doing, fulfilment



Empowerment

responsibility, accomplishment, value

Carers in the workforce

While the degree of responsibility in the caring role prevents some carers from engaging in the workforce, there are many carers who combine paid work with their unpaid caring role.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics¹, in 2015:

- 66% of carers aged 15–64 years were participating in the labour force (compared with 80.3% of non-carers).
- 57.2% of all carers aged over 15 were involved in some form of paid employment.
- Male carers are statistically more likely to work than female carers. 73% of male carers aged 15–64 are employed, compared to 60.8% of female carers in the same age bracket.

The reasons that carers may or may not be in paid employment are complex and can change over time. Sometimes work is a necessity, other times, a luxury. Sometimes it is impossible. Many carers report moving in and out of the workforce, or moving between full time and part time work.

Every care situation is unique and every carer's decision to work is too.

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics, Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers 2012.



1 in 8 Australian
employees are carers¹

Disclosing your carer role at work

Some people prefer to keep their work lives and personal lives separate, while others blend the two worlds seamlessly. Either way, telling your employer about your caring role is a personal decision, and entirely up to you.

It may be in your interest, however, to let your employer know about your circumstances. If your employer knows about your caring responsibilities, you might be able to work together to negotiate access to flexible work arrangements and other forms of support.

Talking to your employer about your carer role doesn't mean you need to tell them everything. You are not obliged to provide details about your caring role or the person you care for.

Before you speak with your employer, find out what provisions exist in your workplace for carers. You might speak with other people in your workplace or industry, or do some research online.



You do not need to go into detail about your relationship to the person you care for or their condition

Carer's rights at work

Every Australian who participates in any form of paid employment, has rights at work that are protected by the *Fair Work Act 2009*^[1]. This Act covers your rights concerning situations such as workplace coercion or discrimination, belonging to a union, or employment arrangements.

What is of particular importance for carers is that this Act also provides all employees in Australia with the legal right to request flexible working arrangements.

The term 'flexible working arrangements' might mean:

- Adjusting the hours of work,
- Adjusting shift patterns or work routines,
- Adjusting role requirements or responsibilities,
- Changing the location where work happens.



To access a fact sheet about the *Fair Work Act 2009*, go to fairwork.gov.au and search "protections at work"

Examples of flexible work arrangements:



Flexible hours

Adjusting the working day to start and/or end earlier or later.



Working remotely

Working at home, or somewhere other than the usual work location. This is often made possible using technology like email, conference calls or online workspaces.



Job rotation

Moving from one job to another for a specific period to reduce work commitments during a period of care.



Job Sharing

Two or more people fulfilling the requirements of one role.



'Day Extender'

Working mainly at the usual work site, during usual hours, but also carrying out additional work at home in the morning or evening.

Returning to work after a break

If you have had time off to care for someone or you are recovering from an illness, returning to work can be daunting.

You may find that the industry you worked for has changed significantly since you last worked and that your skills need to be upgraded so you can adapt to the changes.

Finding out what it's currently like in the industry, before you return to work, can be really helpful. Knowing where and what opportunities exist, what skills are most sought after and the big issues or concerns of the field is.

- Research your industry using the internet,
- Attend conferences and information sessions run by professional associations or peak bodies,
- Read newsletters and listen to relevant pod casts,
- Enrol in short courses, online and through training colleges.

You could:



Reach out to people in the industry like old work colleagues and contacts.



Attend conferences or information sessions run by professional associations or peak bodies. If you can't attend, you could request information from them.



Research your industry online.



Read newsletters, watch documentaries or listen to relevant podcasts.



Take a short course that is relevant to the industry. There are lots of opportunities online or through training colleges.



Finding and getting a job

Working out how to find and get a job can feel pretty overwhelming. It can feel like sitting in front of a pile of blocks and wanting to build something – first you need to know what you're working with and what you want.

Work can provide people with a sense of purpose and meaning through offering challenges that help develop character.

Work can also provide respite from other life activities, provide income and open up opportunities to learn and make new and lasting social connections.



- What has been your experience with employment in the past?
- Was it positive?
- What suited you? What didn't?

Transferable skills

Over the course of your life you will have developed a range of skills that can be applied to any workplace or role. These abilities are referred to as transferable skills.

There are skill areas that apply to most workplaces:

- Communication skills,
- People skills,
- Organisational skills,
- Leadership skills.

As a carer you have developed skills and personal qualities that you may not have recognised before.

Common skills and attributes of carers include being:

- supportive and encouraging,
- good communicators,
- reliable and responsible,
- flexible and responsive,
- organised, proactive,
- emotionally intelligent,
- calm,
- resilient.



What are some of your transferable skills?

Lined area for writing the answer.



Work action planning

Perhaps you are still weighing up whether work is right for you at this time. Maybe you are thinking of getting a job or returning to work. Or maybe you are already working but need to make some adjustments to your work arrangements.

Below are some suggestions of small and meaningful steps you might take to move towards your goal.

Suggestions:

- Make a list outlining the pros and cons of working. You might do this for work, in general, or with a specific job in mind.
- Take a career quiz to find out what job might best fit your talents and skills.
- Seek out career information and advice. You'll probably find that a lot of it is pitched at school leavers but don't let this discourage you! The same general principles apply, regardless of age.
- Create a Career Development Planner – an outline of how you'd like to progress in the workforce.



For more information on career exploration, advice and planning, see the resources section at the end of this coaching session.



Studying and caring

Whether it's a step towards a career, an opportunity to immerse yourself in your passion or a chance to take a break from your carer role, there are many reasons why you might combine studying with caring.

In this section, we will explore the following topics:

- Combining caring and studying,
- Carer experiences of studying and caring – the good and bad,
- Your rights at school – reasonable accommodations,
- Returning to study,
- Education action planning,

You will also find lots of links and resources along the way.

This section deals mainly with tertiary and vocational education.



For information related to combining secondary education and a carer role, visit the Carer Gateway at carergateway.gov.au and search for “high school and caring” or visit the Young Carers Network website: youngcarersnetwork.com.au

Studying can provide opportunities to create, build and strengthen all aspects of **CHIME**:



Connection

classmates, teaching, ideas, community



Hope

career opportunities, financial potential



Identity

personal growth, belonging



Meaning

learning, creating, doing, fulfilment



Empowerment

acquiring knowledge, understanding, value

Combining caring and studying

Schools, universities and colleges may be able to help you juggle competing responsibilities by

- Relaxing deadlines for assessments,
- Providing counselling support,
- Provide note taking services,
- Relaxing attendance requirements including providing e-learning options or self directed tutorials.

You might like to speak to someone about support that's available at your education institution.

There are usually people you can talk to at

- the student union,
- the student wellbeing centre,
- student support groups or counsellors.



4 in 10 Australians
aged between 15–74
participated in formal
and/or non-formal
learning in 2016–2017¹

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics, Work-Related Training and Adult Learning, Australia, 2016-17



Education Action Planning

Many students have caring responsibilities, the caring role can provide motivation to study but can also have emotional impacts that may interfere with your study routine and goals.

The following suggestions may help to ensure you get the right support while reaching your study goals.

Suggestions:

- Talk to your teacher, tutor, lecturer or educational institution administration about flexible deadlines.
- Explore whether you are able to record lectures so you can watch or listen to them later. Lectures or tutorials might also be online.
- Can you complete your course online or do a combination of online and on campus study?
- Create a designated study space at home or arrange to study somewhere else if there is no space at home
- Join a student group for peer support and social connection.



Visit the Carer Gateway at carergateway.gov.au and search “tertiary study and caring” or talk to your state or territory carers association at carersaustralia.com.au. For more see the resources section at the end of this coaching session.



Volunteering and caring

Whether it's about wanting to be part of creating change, a chance to take a break from your carer role or an opportunity to connect with like minded people, there are many reasons why you might combine volunteering with caring.

In this section, we will explore the following topics:

- I already work for free as a carer... why do more?
- Carer experiences of volunteering,
- Your rights and responsibilities when volunteering,
- How can I get involved in voluntary work?
- Volunteering action planning,
- You will find lots of links and resources along the way.

Volunteering can provide opportunities to create, build and strengthen all aspects of **CHIME**:



Connection

colleagues, ideas, community, causes



Hope

helping others, building the future



Identity

personal growth, expression of values



Meaning

learning, creating change, fulfilment



Empowerment

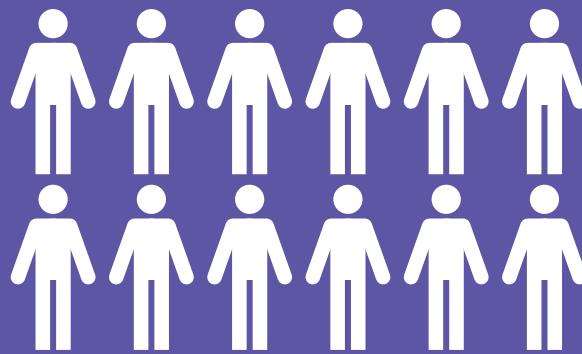
using your voice, working together

Why volunteer?

People choose to volunteer for a variety of reasons. For some it offers the chance to give something back to the community or make a difference to the people around them. For others it provides an opportunity to develop new skills or build on existing experience and knowledge.

Some additional reasons that people give for their decision to volunteer include:

- giving something back to an organisation that has impacted on their life, either directly or indirectly,
- making a difference to the lives of others,
- feeling valued and part of a team,
- spending quality time away from work or a busy lifestyle,
- gaining confidence and self-esteem,
- improving employment prospects,
- meeting new people and making new friends.



6.1 million Australians aged over 18 participated in formal volunteering in 2010¹



Rights and responsibilities when volunteering

As a volunteer, you have the right to:

- clear information about your volunteer role and be given an orientation to the organisation,
- work in a healthy and safe environment,
- be interviewed and engaged in accordance with equal opportunity and anti-discrimination legislation,
- be given a copy of the organisation's volunteer policy.

When you are volunteering, you also have responsibilities.

- You need to demonstrate respect, confidentiality and abide by privacy constraints,
- Be punctual and reliable,
- Carry out the duties listed in your volunteer position description,
- Be accountable for your actions and how you represent the organisation.



How can I get involved in voluntary work?

When considering getting involved in volunteer work, think about an organisation or cause that you are passionate about and want to help.

Consider positions based on the skills you have, or the skills you'd like to develop.

Suggestions:

- Talk to people about their experiences with volunteering. It can help you understand the areas you might like to get involved in.
- You could also watch the volunteer stories at the **govolunteer** website. Consider what time commitment you can make.
- Look for volunteer centres in your local area.
- Create a volunteer profile. This is a short profile about you, including your contact details, what your passions are and the causes you care about. This will assist you when approaching organisations or applying for volunteer positions.



For more information on how to get involved in voluntary work, see the resources section at the end of this coaching session.

Action plan

After reading through the case studies and information in this session, choose one specific, realistic and achievable thing you would like to do with regard to your situation.

Refer back to the page earlier in this workbook where you identified the values that are important to you. Write them in the space provided below.

When you create your plan, think about how the action you want to take will express, support or align with your values.



Action: Write one thing you'd like to try

Why do I want to do this? What is your reason? What do you want to achieve?

Who will I do this with? Who might help you with this? Who might be involved?

When will I do this? Be precise as possible. Can you name a day and time?



Now that you have finished this coaching session, we encourage you to spend a few minutes putting down some of your thoughts or talking through some ideas with your coach or someone you trust. You can write your ideas on this page or in your coaching journal.

You could write or chat with someone about:

- The changes you'd like to see in society – and maybe how you could be involved in creating them.
- The skills it takes to be an effective carer.
- The most rewarding and the most challenging aspects of work or study.

This workbook represents a significant amount of time and energy that you have dedicated to your own wellbeing. It is an important part of your journey and worth hanging on to. Keep it somewhere that allows you to revisit it whenever you need to.

You can also come back to look over, check in on, revise or change your action plan. You can even re-do the activities or share some of the information or resources with friends.



The websites listed in this section provide additional, specific information that is related to the content found in this workbook.

Your coach can help you to access these resources or you can explore them for yourself.

Work action planning

- Career quiz: opencolleges.edu.au/careers/career-quiz
- Career exploration, advice and planning at the My Future website: myfuture.edu.au
- Career advice and resources at seek.com.au
- Career transition assistance: jobsearch.gov.au/career-transition-assistance
- Job Access: jobaccess.gov.au
- Career Development Association of Australia: cdaa.org.au/about-us/about-us

Education Action Planning

- Information about combining tertiary study with caring on the Carer Gateway: carergateway.gov.au/university-and-tertiary-study-and-caring
- Talk to your state or territory carers association about strategies you might find helpful: carersaustralia.com.au/about-us/contact

How can I get involved in voluntary work?

- GoVolunteer: govolunteer.com.au
- Volunteering Australia: volunteeringaustralia.org
- Seek Volunteer: volunteer.com.au

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NOTES

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NOTES

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Phone: 1800 422 737 (Monday–Friday, 8am–5pm local time)

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