

Everyday life

Navigating the day to day challenges of your caring role



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

There's always so much to do



Betty, 78, N.S.W.

It's reassuring for me to have a plan in place for when my husband becomes unwell.

When my husband has to go to hospital there is a lot that needs to happen in a small window of time. Over the years I have worked out what needs doing and that eases some of my fear. I know I can manage.



Siobhan, 33, Qld.

It was quite a shock to see how many hours I spend in my caring role.

I had never sat down and worked out exactly how many hours I spend providing support. I didn't have time! I see now why I feel so busy and tired and it's actually helped me realise I'd like support to find more of a balance.



Jodi, 24, Vic.

I made a conscious decision to notice when things are going well.

I made notes about the things I do when life's going well. Now I find myself noticing when I'm doing those things and it's like a reminder that oh, yeah, things are good. It's as if I get to enjoy the feeling for longer.



Yonna, 46, W.A.

I realised I was trying to ignore my fears.

I was exercising every day and becoming quite militant about it. I realised I was literally trying to run away from my problems. Now I use exercise differently, it's time to reflect on my worries, but also have some time for myself. It's something I can enjoy again.



Marcus, 39, N.S.W.

Some of my responses to stress were creating more stress.

I didn't know how to deal with the stress of looking after my partner. Early on, my way of coping wasn't helpful, for me or my partner. I think I was trying to pretend it was all OK when it wasn't.



Gayle, 51, N.T.

I know the signs that I'm not travelling well.

It might sound a bit strange, but I know that when I start getting multiple parking fines, it's an indication I'm not travelling so great. I know it's time to call up my sister and talk through what's going on for me.



Ron, 63, S.A.

It's really hard to accept there are things outside of my control.

I like things to be ordered and planned and that just doesn't fit with the reality of our life anymore. I feel like we are always on alert, trying to be ready for anything, when really you have no choice but to roll with it.



How can we sustain in our caring role?

We work hard to keep it all together, to make sure everything gets done. What impact does this have on our wellbeing?

In this coaching session you will consider the tasks required in your caring role. You will also think about how you respond when situations and circumstances change.

Topics:

- Common tasks in a caring role,
- What does your caring role look like?
- Navigating your caring role.

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

- Identify the extent of your caring role,
- Know how to read some of your personal signals,
- Acknowledge how you respond to obstacles and challenges.

This workbook contains the following sections:**Page**

Introduction to common caring tasks	8
Exploration of your caring experiences	14
Looking ahead	40

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 caring role

The demands of every caring situation are different.

We know that a carer provides unpaid support and assistance to someone else, but the form this assistance takes will vary greatly.

Sometimes assistance means helping with daily activities like preparing meals, bathing, dressing, going to the toilet, moving around and taking medications. In other cases, providing support is about behaviour management or emotional support, encouragement or linking people to services or community.

Some carers are 'on duty' around the clock and others provide support on a regular basis. Some give assistance occasionally or as needed.

Regardless of what your caring role entails, being able to find a balance between the responsibilities of your caring role and what you need to do for yourself, can feel like a constant battle.

Working out what it is you actually do, or need to do, and how you feel about how that looks, is key to being able to find a sustainable way forward.

What do carers do?

Every support situation is unique and the tasks required in each caring role are different; sometimes there is a routine or a rhythm to how support is provided, other times one day will look very different to the next.

There are so many different ways that carers provide support. The list opposite shows examples of some tasks carers might do as part of their caring role.



Activities of daily living

Personal hygiene, grooming, bathing, dressing, eating, mobility



Literacy and communication

Managing finances, other paperwork, reading and writing, interpreting, communication



Health care co-ordination

Supervise or administer medication, arranging services, liaising with health professionals, assisting with treatment plan



Responding to behaviour

Teaching, reinforcing appropriate behaviour, managing inappropriate behaviour, managing outcomes of behaviour



Emotional support

Companionship, encouragement, motivating, affirming, listening



Household tasks

Grocery shopping, preparing meals, laundry, cleaning, property maintenance, gardening



Transport

Assistance getting to and from appointments, assistance getting to and from work, accompany in transit, arranging transportation



Supervising and monitoring

Encouraging participation, keeping person active or occupied, supervising to prevent harm, wandering or damage

What do you *do*?

A common strength among carers is *agility* – being able to adjust to the demands of a situation, to go with the flow and work with what's available. Carers do what's needed, when it's needed. We have to.

It's likely that the shape of your caring role, what you actually do, changes from day to day. Most likely, there's no such thing as 'a normal day'. However, there are usually some tasks you perform regularly or some things you need to do quite often.

When we are constantly adapting and doing, we can lose sight of the extent of what it is we do.

It's useful to step back and take stock from time to time. It allows us to see the reality of our caring role.



For each area listed in the table, enter in the average number of hours each week you spend performing these types of tasks, as part of your caring role.

For the purposes of this exercise, you don't need to be exact.
An estimate is enough to work with, so round up to the nearest full hour.

Carer tasks	Average hours per week
Activities of daily living	
Transport	
Literacy and communication	
Health care coordination	
Household tasks	
Emotional support	
Responding to behaviour	
Supervising and monitoring	



- What tasks take up most of your time?
- Does this surprise you?

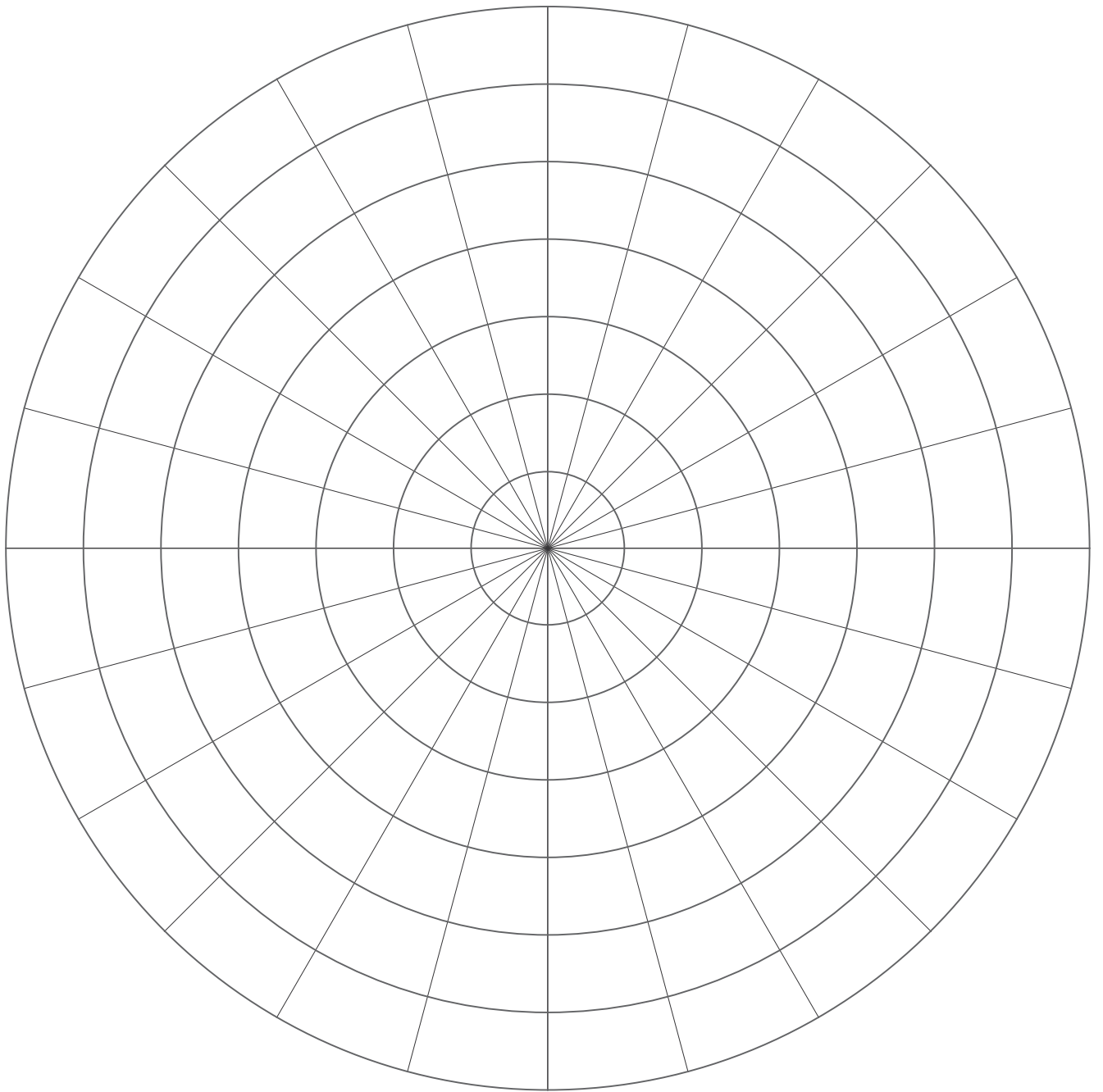
This is what you do



On the image opposite, colour in one segment for each hour you have identified in the table on the previous page.

You might like to choose to use one colour to represent the total hours, or you could use different colours for hours spent doing different caring tasks.

Keep the coloured hours together so you are able to see them as a distinct section of the circle.



Does it all add up?

The circle on the previous page has 168 sections – equal to the amount of hours in one week.

Though this exercise can't accurately show the exact number of hours in a week that you dedicate to caring, it does give an indication.

It can be quite a shock to see the extent of the tasks, activities and time involved in your caring role. It even might feel strange seeing your responsibilities on a chart, as an objective display of information.

What this exercise shows is that you have competing demands on your time. As a carer, you need to squeeze a lot out of the limited hours in a week.

On your own, or with your coach or a friend, consider the reflection questions on the next page.



What else do you need to fit into your week? What activities would fill the remaining sections in the circle? (You might choose to add these to your circle in a new colour)

How do you feel when you think about what has to fit into the remaining hours in a week?

Are there hours in your week where you are doing multiple caring tasks at the same time? How might this change the look of your circle?



Now what would happen if you added sleep, work, and other commitments to this chart?



Your response to your caring role

For people who aren't in a caring role, the typical assumption is that carers do too much. This is frequently followed by the suggestion that if a carer wants to feel better, they need to do less. Or take a break. Or have someone else do the tasks.

But it isn't that simple. There are times when a carer just has to find extra hours in the day, or more energy in the tank. It isn't a choice, it's just the way it is. In many situations, doing less isn't actually an option. And the suggestion to do less isn't very helpful; in fact, it can cause feelings of guilt and shame if we feel unable to do less.

What may be helpful is understanding how you respond to the reality of your caring role. Having an awareness of how you are travelling, how you feel while juggling your responsibilities, allows you to build in supports that actually help in tough times.



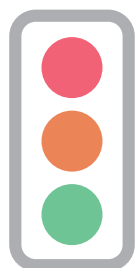
Understanding the signals

One way of understanding how you're travelling is to get to know your personal signals. Your behaviours, habits and even your body can tell you a great deal about the impact your caring role is having.

Quite often, because we are so busy, we lose touch with our internal signals. Sometimes we might notice a signal but forget what it means. Or perhaps ignore the signal. Maybe we miss the signal all together.

Being able to identify how you experience good times, respond to challenging times and what it looks like for you when you're facing difficult times is really important. It is part of developing an awareness of your needs, being able to identify where you're at and being able to think about what you want to happen.

It can be useful to think of your internal signals like traffic lights; they communicate what's going on – to you and to the world around you.



Red light – there is cause for concern

Amber light – things are getting hard

Green light – life is going well

Let's explore what each light actually looks like for you.



The green light

When we get a green light it's a signal that we can keep going; there isn't any reason to stop. Life is good and we're moving forward.

The green traffic light represents feeling comfortable, capable, and in control. There is balance and moving forward. We may face challenges but we have the resources to handle them.

Think about what it's like when things are going well for you. Use the form opposite to create a picture of what a green light looks like for you.



My green signals

How do I feel?

Emotions and physical sensations

How do I act?

What do I do? How do I behave?

How does it look to others?

How would someone else know I'm at 'green'?



The amber light

When we get an amber light it's a signal to slow down, to check for what's ahead, to move with caution.

The amber traffic light represents change, concern and confusion. There is a sense of things being out of balance and a hesitancy to move forward. We may face challenges and not feel sure how to handle them.

Think about what it's like when things aren't going so well. Use the form opposite to create a picture of what an amber light looks like for you.



My amber signals

How do I feel?

Emotions and physical sensations

How do I act?

What do I do? How do I behave?

How does it look to others?

How would someone else know I'm at 'amber'?



The red light

When we get a red light it's a signal to stop because it's dangerous to proceed.

The red traffic light represents shut down. There is a sense of things being out of control and an inability to move. We may be encountering challenges we don't want to face, or feel unable to acknowledge.

Think about what it's like when you're feeling stuck or overwhelmed. Use the form opposite to create a picture of what a red light looks like for you.



My red signals

How do I feel?

Emotions and physical sensations

How do I act?

What do I do? How do I behave?

How does it look to others?

How would someone else know I'm at 'red'?



The unforeseen road block

Becoming aware of how our traffic lights look helps us to recognise patterns in our behaviour. This can allow us to make changes in our lives to help avoid further difficulties or it might help us to realise we could use some extra support.

Sometimes though, regardless of the warning signals or supports we might have in place, we can hit an obstacle or roadblock; something that prevents us from continuing on the path we were travelling.

How do we deal with the unplanned or unexpected?

What do we do when we find ourselves in a situation that is outside of our control?

Encountering unexpected diversions is something everyone will deal with at one time or another. However, the upheaval caused by unplanned events can be significant to a carer.

What it takes to deal with these roadblocks or diversions, and the toll that can take, is intensified when you are in a caring role.

Encountering unforeseen road blocks

For carers and those we support, a change in routine or an unplanned event can have wide ranging consequences.

Whether it's a trip interstate on short notice, a promotion at work or having your car break down, adjusting to unexpected events has consequences.

How have you dealt with unplanned events in the past? What did you do and how did you feel when you had to adapt or alter your plans or adjust the direction you were heading in?



Think about a time you needed to change plans quickly.

Write some of your ideas in the space provided below.
You might discuss this with a friend or coach.

What happened?

How did you respond?

What did you do?

How did you feel during that time?

How do you respond to unforeseen obstacles?

People respond to obstacles in a huge variety of ways.

- Some people try to go *over* the obstacle, no matter the danger.
- Some try to go *through* the obstacle.
- Some go *around* the obstacle.
- Some people pretend the obstacle isn't even there.
- What do you do when you encounter an obstacle? What is your immediate response?



Think about what it's like for you to encounter an obstacle, a challenge or an unexpected situation. What do you do? What action do you take?

Circle any of the actions below if they describe how you tend to respond. You can also add other actions of your own.

Eat

Sleep

Make a plan

Complain

Go for a walk

Drink alcohol

Cry

Talk about it

Clean

Stop eating

Deny it's happening

Exercise

Watch TV

Lash out

Smoke

Write a list

Nourishing or depleting

Some behaviours help us in the short term but aren't so helpful to us down the track.

Some actions are helpful to others at a cost to ourselves.

Our actions can be nourishing; they can feed us and promote growth and development. Other actions may have the opposite effect; they deplete our energy and weaken us.

Nourishing actions lift our mood, increase our energy and allow us to grow and develop in the long term, though they may or may not be enjoyable in the short term.

Depleting actions lower our mood, drain our energy, and tend to have negative long term impacts.



Looking back at the actions you identified on the previous page, which would you categorise as nourishing and which as depleting?

Nourishing	Who does it nourish?	Depleting	Who does it deplete?



What factors influence whether you choose to respond to stress with a nourishing or depleting action?

Expecting the unexpected

Knowing our typical responses to an obstacle, how we act and whether that tends to be nourishing or depleting for us, can help us to work out how we'd like to respond to these types of situations in the future.

When we pair this awareness with an understanding of our green, amber and red signals, we can start to create a plan for how to navigate unexpected situations.

One way of finding a way forward is to collect all of your thoughts in one place.

This worksheet can be used as a way of collecting thoughts and feelings and allowing a way forward to emerge.

A worksheet like this can be done when you encounter an unforeseen obstacle and want to clarify your direction. Or it might be something you work through after the dust settles, in order to make sense of what has happened.



Navigating the obstacle

What's happening? Describe the obstacle or unplanned event	
How am I feeling? What emotions or physical sensations are you experiencing?	What am I doing? What signals are you seeing? What actions are you taking?
Who can I reach out to? Friends, family, online or phone support services, professionals	Where can I go? Where do you feel good? Where do you feel safe? Where can you get support?
How do I want it to be? How would you like to be feeling and acting? What do you want to be able to do?	What do you want help with? What could make this situation easier to navigate?



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:

- How it feels to juggle your responsibilities,
- What it feels like to encounter obstacles,
- Why you respond to obstacles in the way you do.

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.



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