

iSupport For Young People

Module 3 Caring for me



CARING FOR ME

- Session 1. *Reducing stress in everyday life*
- Session 2. *Making time for pleasant and meaningful activities*
- Session 3. *Thinking differently*



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Session 1. Reducing stress in everyday life

Why is this session important?

It is important to take care of yourself while you support your family in caring for a person with dementia.

How will this session help me?

This session will help you to reduce stress and renew your energy with exercises that do not take much time.

What will I learn?

1. The importance of relaxing.
2. Different ways to relax:
 - Basic breathing.
 - Mindful breathing.
 - Neck movements.
 - Number counting.
 - Imagery.
 - Total stretching.
 - Muscle relaxation.
3. How to relax at any time and any place.

1. The importance of relaxing

Let's look at an example



Diana helps her mum take care of her dad Dan who has dementia. She is also trying to get good grades in school. Some days she feels really stressed with everything going on. She decides to talk to her favourite teacher at school.

Her teacher advised her to try to relax and not ask too much of herself. Diana tells the teacher that with helping care for her dad and schoolwork she does not have any time left or energy to relax. Her teacher explains that there are

ways to relax that do not take much time, and that relaxing might give Diana more energy that could help her get things done.

Diana decides to follow her teacher's advice and tries the breathing exercise that she showed her.

When Diana sees her teacher at school she says: "Thank you for the good advice. Although I still have a lot to do, I feel less tense." Diana decides to do the breathing exercise every time she is feeling tense and things are getting too much.

Relaxation:

- Makes you feel less tense.
- Might renew your energy.
- May make it easier to get things done.
- Does not have to take much time.

2. Different ways to relax

There are different ways you can relax. Try and see which one(s) suit you best.

Before you try an exercise ask yourself: "How tense am I feeling"? After the exercise, ask yourself again. This might help you see whether this type of exercise is helping you relax.

You will find seven relaxation exercises. The first three exercises will take only a few minutes (i.e. 5 minutes max.). The other exercises will take a little longer (i.e. 10-15 minutes max.). Have a go and see which one(s) works best for you!

Use the scale below of 1-10 and tick what number describes how tense you are feeling now: 1 is very small amount of tension and 10 is very high amount of tension.

VERY
SMALL



VERY
HIGH

1. Relaxation activity - Basic breathing

Focusing on your breathing is relaxing. By doing a breathing exercise you could reduce tension.

This exercise will take: less than 5 minutes.

Caution: if you experience difficulty breathing, this exercise might not be the best option for you.

This is how you do it (you can be sitting down or standing):

When sitting down, sit up straight in your chair with your back against the back of your chair.

- When standing, stand up straight.
- Put both of your feet flat on the surface.
- Focus on your breathing.
- Keep breathing like you are used to.
- Try to feel how you breathe. Put your hand on your stomach to feel how you inhale and exhale.
- Exhale from your mouth and pull in your stomach as much as possible.
- Follow your breathing in this manner a couple of breaths and then stop the exercise.

2. Relaxation activity - Mindful breathing

This exercise will help you feel calm and reduces stress. You will breathe with your stomach according to a rhythm.

This exercise will take: 5 minutes.

This is how you do it:

- Sit straight in a chair and make sure your face and shoulders are relaxed
- Bring your hands to your stomach and breathe into it.
- Breathe in for 4 counts and out for 8 counts, at a comfortable pace.
- Your stomach should expand with each inhale and contract with each exhale.
- Return to your normal breathing and spend one minute just observing yourself breathing and noticing how you feel.
- Practice listening to your own thoughts without negative judgement.
- If your mind wanders, refocus on breathing and meditation.

3. Relaxation activity - Neck movements

With this exercise you will feel less tension in your neck. It will also increase the blood flow to your brain.

This exercise will take: 5 minutes.

This is how you do it:

- Make sure to move slowly and with attention.
- Bend your neck forward and backward
- Inhale while you lift your head up and back. Exhale while you drop your chin to your chest.
- Rotate your chin from side to side.
- Inhale when your chin is in the centre. Exhale when you look to the side.
- Drop your ear towards your shoulder.
- Inhale when you are in the centre. Exhale when you drop your ear to your shoulder.
- Repeat 5 times.

4. Relaxation activity - Number counting

You can relax by focusing on your breathing and counting back from 20 to 1.

This exercise will take: 5 minutes.

This is how you do it:

- Sit or lie down comfortably in a quiet place.
- Breathe slowly.
- With each breath, take at least 3 seconds to breathe in and 6 seconds to breathe out.
- Focus on your breathing and your lower stomach when you breathe until you feel calm and peaceful inside your heart and mind.
- Say the word 'relax' whenever you breathe out.
- Tell yourself that you will start counting down from 20 to 1.
- Tell yourself that you will double your level of relaxation for each and every count, and will be totally relaxed when you reach 1.
- Start counting down from 20 to 1 slowly. Say the word 'relax' whenever you count (that is, take a deep breath, say '20', breathe out slowly and say 'relax', take a deep breath, count '19', breathe out slowly and say 'relax', and so on).
- Now repeat this exercise but with your eyes closed.

5. Relaxation activity - Imagery

You can relax by imagining you are in a place or surrounded by people and things you like.

This exercise will take: 5 minutes.

Before completing this exercise, take a look at the helpful guidelines below.

- Only imagine places, people and things you like.
- Imagine what you can hear, feel, smell, and/or taste if you were in that place.
- Try to think of very specific details of the place, thing or person. For example, how does the surface of the thing feel and how does it smell?

Now try to relax while imagining that you are in a place or with the people or things that you like.

This is how you do it:

- Sit or lie down comfortably in a quiet place.
- Breathe slowly.
- With every breath, take at least three seconds to breathe in and at least six seconds to breathe out.
- Focus on your breathing and your lower stomach when you breathe until you feel peaceful inside
- Imagine you are in a place or surrounded by things or people you like.
- Now do this exercise again but close your eyes.

6. Relaxation activity - Muscle relaxation

This exercise is particularly helpful when your muscles feel tense. This exercise will help you relax by tensing and relaxing your muscles.

This exercise will take: 10-15 minutes

Caution: if you have any injuries or any other physical limitations, this may not be the best exercise for you. Try one of the other exercises.

Below are some general instructions for you to keep in mind.

- When you are ready to begin, tighten the muscle group described. Make sure that you can feel the tension, but no pain. Keep the muscle tensed for approximately 5 seconds.
- Relax the muscles and keep it relaxed for approximately 10 seconds. It may be helpful to say 'relax' as you relax the muscle.
- When you have finished the muscle relaxation, remain seated for a few moments allowing yourself to become alert.

This is how you do it:

- **Right hand and forearm:** make a fist with your right hand. Hold for 5 seconds and then relax for 10 seconds. Don't forget to breathe. It might be helpful to inhale while tensing your muscles and exhale while relaxing your muscles. Do the same for your left hand and forearm.
- **Right upper arm:** bring your right forearm up to your shoulder to 'make a muscle'. Hold for 5 seconds and then relax for 10 seconds. Do the same for your left upper arm.
- **Forehead:** raise your eyebrows as high as they will go, as though you were surprised by something. Hold for 5 seconds and then relax for 10 seconds.
- **Eyes and cheeks:** squeeze your eyes closed. Hold for 5 seconds and then relax for 10 seconds.
- **Mouth and jaw:** open your mouth as wide as you can, as if you are yawning. Hold for 5 seconds and then relax for 10 seconds.
- **Neck:** be careful as you tense these muscles. Face forward and then pull your head back slowly, as though you are looking up to the ceiling. Hold for 5 seconds and then relax for 10 seconds.
- **Shoulders:** tense the muscles in your shoulders as you bring them up towards your ears. Hold for 5 seconds and then relax for 10 seconds.

- **Shoulder blades/Back:** push your shoulder blades back, trying to almost touch them together, so that your chest is pushed forward. Hold for 5 seconds and then relax for 10 seconds.
- **Chest and stomach:** breathe in deeply, filling up your lungs and chest with air. Hold for 5 seconds and then relax for 10 seconds.
- **Hips and buttocks:** squeeze the muscles in your buttocks. Hold for 5 seconds and then relax for 10 seconds.
- **Right upper leg:** tighten your right thigh. Hold for 5 seconds and then relax for 10 seconds. Repeat for your left upper leg.
- **Right lower leg:** do this slowly and carefully to avoid cramps. Pull your toes towards you to stretch the calf muscle. Hold for 5 seconds and then relax for 10 seconds. Repeat for your left lower leg.
- **Right foot:** curl your toes downwards. Hold for 5 seconds and then relax for 10 seconds. Repeat for your left foot.

7. Relaxation activity - Total stretching

Stretching your muscles can help to decrease tension. Stretching exercises are very convenient since you can do them anywhere and anytime.

This exercise will take: 10 minutes.

This is how you do it:

- Stand up or do this exercise in your chair.
- Take a deep breath, all the way down to the bottom of your stomach, and slowly let it out.
- As you exhale, feel the tension drain from your body.
- Take one more breath and hold it for a moment... and let it out slowly.
- With each breath you are becoming more and more relaxed.
- Now, gently reach your arms out to the sides as though you were trying to touch the walls.
- Relax your shoulders and stretch yourself a little.
- Gently reach your arms out in front of you.
- Feel the muscles in your back and shoulders loosen up.
- Stretch out in front a little further.
- And now reach up as high as you can.
- Push up your arms towards the sky, as if you were trying to reach the sun.
- Again, reach your arms out to the sides as though you were trying to touch the walls, as though you were trying to push them outwards.
- Reach out in front of you.
- Feel your muscles in your back and shoulders become looser and less tense.
- Reach towards the sky one more time.
- Reach as high as you can.
- Try to touch the sun.
- Lower your arms to your sides.
- Now, roll your shoulders back.
- Feel the tension drain from your body.
- Roll your shoulders back again. One more time roll your shoulders.
- Now roll them forward. Forward again. One more time forward.
- Now shrug your shoulders, lifting them up and then pushing them down. Shrug your shoulders again. Shrug them one more time.
- Now another deep and refreshing breath and exhale all of the tension in your body.
- Take one more breath...and exhale letting go of any remaining tension.

3. Relaxing at any time and any place

You can take some time to relax at any time of the day and in any place (even in school!).

Let's look at an example

Tom: Relaxing on the way to school

Tom often feels tense when he is on the school bus in the morning. The ride is about half an hour long and he starts worrying about all the schoolwork he has to do on top of helping his dad care for his mum. He decides to do a breathing exercise while on the bus. Afterwards, he feels less tense.

You can also plan a specific time to relax, for example every day before going to bed. You can choose what suits you best. If necessary, you can set a reminder on your phone to make sure that you do not forget to take time to relax.

Keep in Mind

- You can take some time to relax anywhere and at any time of the day, including school!
- Set a goal: try to do a relaxation exercise at least once a day.
- You can plan a specific time to relax every day (if necessary, set a reminder on your phone).
- These exercises can help you relax, have more energy and be in a better mood.
- Even a 5 minute exercise can make a difference! If it doesn't work first time, don't worry, you can try that exercise again or do another one!

You can find more information going to the website of the Alzheimer's Association in your country: <https://www.alzint.org/our-members/member-associations/>

Session 2. Making time for pleasant and meaningful activities

Why is this session important?

It is important to take care of yourself while you help to care for another person. This session will help you to keep providing care.

How will this session help me?

This session will help you to take time for yourself and do pleasant and meaningful activities to relax.

What will I learn?

1. The importance of pleasant and meaningful activities.
2. How to deal with the barriers to doing the things you love.
3. Making pleasant and meaningful activities achievable.
4. Doing pleasant and meaningful activities together.

1. The importance of pleasant and meaningful activities

Having fun and doing pleasant and meaningful activities is important because caregiving can last a long time. Doing things that you like doing can help you relax and re-charge energy to be able to continue to help care for your family member. Pleasant and meaningful activities can be small things such as going for a walk or talking to a friend. This may not always be easy, because someone might have to take over your caring role while you are not there.

Let's look at a few examples

Amy

Amy is 16 and helps her parents care for her grandmother who is living with dementia. She dedicates most of her spare time to schoolwork and caregiving so doesn't have much time to do fun things that she likes doing. Amy is getting really tired and overwhelmed and feels that she is struggling to keep up with everything.

Jose

Jose is 13 and helps care for his dad who is living with dementia. He plays in the local football team but lately he hasn't been going to matches because he doesn't want to have to ask his mum to drive him. He feels like he is missing out but doesn't say anything because he feels guilty.

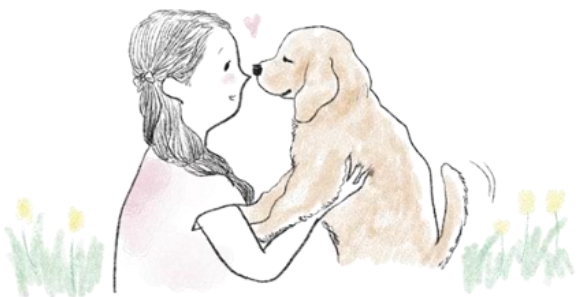
Rashid

Rashid is 15 and helps care for his grandad who is living with dementia. He also has two younger sisters. Recently, his parents have hired a professional carer who stops by three times a week to help his grandad. Since this happened Rashid and his family have been able to go out and spend a few hours doing something together as a family, going for walks or to the cinema.

Keep in Mind

- If you are not able to make time for yourself and to do the things you like doing, you can get very tired which may make you less able to continue help your family.
- You can ask family and friends to help so that you can take some time for yourself.
- If your family can afford it, a hired professional carer could come to help and that way you could all have a bit of time off.

Which pleasant and meaningful activities would you like to do?



Once you have some time for yourself, it can be hard to think of the things you would like to do. There are many possibilities and even in a short amount of time, you can still do an activity that you like.

4. Activity

Please check at least two activities that you would like to do more often. If your favourite activity is not listed below, use the 'other' box to write your own activity.

- Listen to music
- Watch TV
- Spend time with friends
- Go to the cinema
- Do sport
- Do crafts
- Read
- Exercise
- Go shopping
- Go for a walk
- Other _____

2. Barriers to doing the things you love

Let's go back to Amy's example

Amy dedicates most of her time to helping care for her grandma and doing schoolwork. She feels like she is tired all the time. She is always worried about all the schoolwork she has to do. She also misses having time to go spend time with her friends on weekends. She feels that she does not have enough time to do everything.

Eventually, Amy is so tired that she decides to ask her parents and teachers for help. She is now able to make some time for herself and spend time with her friends. Amy feels happier and with more energy. She is also enjoying the time she spends with her grandma more.

Other reasons you may feel unable to do pleasant activities

Not having time was the reason that Amy did not feel as though she could do any pleasant and meaningful activities. However, there are several other reasons.

2. Activity

There might be several reasons why you may feel that you can't do the things you like doing. Do you recognise any of the following?

Please select any that may apply to you.

No time. You might feel that you are too busy with school and your caring responsibilities and not able to find any spare time. It is really important that you try to make some time during the day or in the evening to do something you enjoy. Even if it's just 5 minutes of listening to your favourite music!

No energy and not in the mood. You might have less energy because trying to keep up with schoolwork, and your caring responsibilities can be exhausting. Although it is hard to imagine, it is likely that you will feel more energised and in a better mood after doing something you like.

No money. Doing something you like doesn't have to be expensive. For example, meeting a friend to go for a walk is free.

Guilt. You might feel guilty if you think you are running away from your family member with dementia. You need time to do things you like. To help take care of somebody means taking care of yourself as well.

Suggestions for doing the things you love

- Consider asking someone to help you with some of your day-to-day tasks.
- Consider the impact of not doing certain tasks. For example, if you would like to join an after school club, talk to your family to see if they can organise help during that time.
- Think about ways to better organise your time. For example, you could use the calendar and agenda in your phone to organise your activities and the things you have to do.
- Talk to someone about how you might be able to organise your time better. For example, talk to your favourite

3. Making pleasant activities achievable

Now rate how achievable it would be for you to do the pleasant activities that you chose earlier in this session.

Read every activity and consider whether it is:

1. Unachievable
2. Unlikely to be achievable
3. Somewhat achievable
4. Achievable
5. Very achievable

3. Activity

Select at least two activities that you would like to do more often. If your favourite activity is not listed below, use the "Other" answer and make a note of the activity.

- Listen to music
- Watch TV
- Spend time with friends
- Go to the cinema
- Do sport
- Do crafts
- Read
- Exercise
- Go shopping
- Go for a walk
- Other _____

4. Doing pleasant activities together

Doing the things you love is very important. It can be very rewarding to do some of these things with the person that you help care for. However, it might be difficult at first to think of activities that are nice and suitable for both of you.

In this exercise we will make a list of the pleasant activities that you can do with the person you help care for.

Let's look at an example:

Ana and her sister help their mum take care of their dad who is living with dementia. During the weekends to give their mum a rest, the sisters go for a long walk around the neighbourhood with their dad. They then sit in their favourite park to have a drink. The sisters enjoy the walks and their dad also benefits because he is able to get some exercise and fresh air.

What would you like to do more often?

Take a look at the list below for examples of what you can do with your family member with dementia.

4. Activity

Please select at least one activity that you would like to do together more often.

If an activity is not listed below, use the 'other' box at the bottom of the list to add the activity that you would like to do.

- Listen to music
- Play a musical instrument
- Take a relaxing walk
- Listen to or read stories, newspaper articles, poems, etc.
- Go out to eat together
- Cook and prepare snacks
- Watch birds or animals
- Do handiwork or crafts
- Look at photos
- Watch the clouds or explore nature
- Recall and discuss happy memories
- Have friends over to visit
- Other _____

Keep in mind that despite the challenges, pleasant activities are good for you and are necessary to ensure that you are able to keep supporting your family.

Session 3. Thinking differently

Why is this session important?

Your thoughts determine how you feel. Unhelpful thoughts can make us feel bad.

How will this session help me?

This session will help you think differently and give you ideas on how you can change your unhelpful thoughts into helpful ones.

What will I learn?

1. Thoughts determine how we feel. You cannot change what happens, but you can change your response.
2. Learn to think differently by changing unhelpful thoughts into helpful ones.
3. Thinking differently makes you feel better.

1. Thoughts determine how we feel

There are different ways to deal with stressful events. One way is to think differently.

It is not an event that makes you feel angry, sad, happy or guilty, it is how you think about it.

An event can be anything. Here are a few examples:

- Your family member with dementia becomes angry when you ask him/her something.
- Your friend who promised to help you does not turn up or cancels on you.
- The person you help care for cannot find something.

Many people think that their feelings are a direct consequence of an event. However, it is the way that you think about the event that determines how you feel.

Lost keys

Jo is married to Max who is living with dementia. They live with their daughter Emily who is 14 years old. Jo and Emily are about to leave the house to drop Emily off with her friend at the shopping centre and have lunch. Max says, "I can't find my keys! You cannot leave me without keys!" Emily thinks to herself: "We cannot leave dad alone anymore." She starts to feel very sad and anxious.

1. Check your understanding

Imagine that you are living with dementia.

What do you think Emily could do?

Please check all the responses that you feel are appropriate.

- Tell her dad that they cannot help him search now and leave.
- Help her mum and dad search for the keys until they find them.
- Tell her dad that he should be more careful not to lose his keys in the future.
- Think to herself, "dad has dementia and is sometimes worried when he loses things. I can take some time to help him and mum and then go." Then Emily can call her friend and explain that she will be a bit late.

1. Check your understanding

Imagine that you are living with dementia.

What do you think Emily could do?

- ✗ Tell her dad, Max, they cannot help him search now and leave. **This is not a helpful response.** Emily's dad, Max, has dementia and is feeling worried. He could be very upset if Jo and Emily leave the house right now.
- ✗ Search for the keys until they find them. **This could be a helpful response.** Emily's dad, Max, might feel safer if he has the keys. However, this may mean Emily misses meeting her friend and is left feeling miserable.
- ✗ Tell her dad that he should be more careful not to lose his keys in the future. **This is not a helpful response.** Max has dementia, he cannot help misplacing things.
- ✓ Think to herself, "Dad has dementia and is sometimes worried when he loses things. We can take some time to help and then go." Then call her friend and explain that she is going to be a bit late. **This is a helpful response.** It is not the fact that Max has lost the keys that is making Emily miserable, but her concern that her mum and her always need to help her dad and cannot leave him alone anymore. After Emily has called her friend, she can help her dad search for the keys, which will make him feel safer. Then she can go to see her friend.

Emily's unhelpful and helpful thoughts

Emily thinks to herself when her dad Max cannot find his keys: "We cannot leave dad alone anymore." This makes her feel very sad and anxious.

This means that Emily is thinking in an unhelpful way. Unhelpful thoughts can make it harder to respond in useful ways to situations like this.

Instead, Emily could think: "Dad has dementia and is sometimes worried when he loses things. I can take some time to help him find his keys and then go." This different way of thinking will probably make Emily feel better and help her stay calm and compassionate. Helpful thoughts can make it easier to respond in useful ways to situations like these.

Unhelpful thoughts make you feel bad

Aryan has been helping her parents care for her grandma who is living with dementia since she was 12 years old, she is now 16. She has many thoughts. Some make her feel worse, some make her feel better.

2. Check your understanding

Thoughts that can make you feel better

Can you indicate which of Aryan's thoughts may help make her feel better?
Aryan might think...

- Making time to do the things I like doing helps me to provide better care for my grandma.
- I am a bad carer if my grandma is not always happy.
- Maybe my grandma will get better.
- No one understands how hard it is to help care for someone with dementia.
- No one can provide the care for my grandma the way my parents and I do.
- Asking others for help can help my family and I share the responsibilities.
- Dementia is a disease, it is not my or anyone else's fault.

2. Check your understanding

Thoughts that can make you feel better

Which of Aryan's thoughts may help make her feel better?

✓ Making time to do the things I like doing helps me to provide better care for my grandma. **This is a helpful thought.** No one should feel guilty when taking time for themselves. It might help the carer to continue providing care in the long term.

✗ I am a bad carer if my grandma is not always happy. **This thought will make Aryan feel unhappy and sad.** The mood of the person living with dementia does not depend solely on the carer. For example, mood can also be related to dementia, depression or personality.

✗ Maybe my grandma will get better. **This thought may make Aryan feel disappointed** as people with dementia continue to decline. There are many diseases that cause dementia. Unfortunately, there is no cure for any of these diseases yet.

✓ Dementia is a disease, it is not my or anyone else's fault. **This thought is helpful** and might prevent feelings of guilt.

✗ No one understands how hard it is to care. **This thought may make Aryan feel upset,** isolated and lonely. There might be people who do not understand how hard it is to care. However, talking to other people may help them better understand what dementia is and help you to take some pressure off.

✗ No one can provide the care for my grandma the way my parents and I do. **This thought could make Aryan feel lonely, isolated and under a lot of pressure.** Although others may provide care in a different way, that does not mean that it is always of a lower standard. It is important to involve others in caring for a person living with dementia, to avoid getting overwhelmed.

✓ Asking others for help can help my family and I share care duties. **This is a helpful thought** that may make Aryan feel more in control. Involving other people in caregiving has lots of potential benefits. For instance, her parents and her will be able to take breaks more regularly and provide care for a longer time.

2. Learn to think differently by changing unhelpful thoughts into helpful ones

Xavier chats to his teacher

Xavier helps take care of his father, who is living with dementia. One day in school Xavier seems distracted, his teacher who knows his family situation asks to speak to him after the lesson. He asks Xavier, "How are you? Is there anything we can do as a school to help?"

Xavier thinks to himself, "If my teacher thinks I need help, he must think that I am not doing well at school".

3. Check your understanding

How thoughts influence our feelings

How do you think Xavier is feeling?

Please check all the responses that you feel are appropriate.

- Angry
- Guilty
- Happy
- Lonely
- Sad
- Supported
- Upset

3. Check your understanding

How thoughts influence our feelings

Xavier thought, "if my teacher thinks that I need help, he must think I am not doing well at school."

How do you think Xavier is feeling?

This is an unhelpful thought that may make Xavier feel:

- ✓ Angry
- ✓ Guilty
- ✓ Lonely
- ✓ Sad
- ✓ Upset

1. Activity

Which unhelpful thoughts do you have?

Below you will find a list of unhelpful thoughts. Please check the unhelpful thoughts that you have.

- I have to do everything alone.
- The person I help care for does not care about me anymore.
- I am the one to blame if the person I help care for is not happy.
- Maybe my family member will get better.
- I must always be available for the person I help care for.
- I should not consider my own needs.
- No one understands how hard it is to care.
- No one can provide care the way my family and I do.
- My family member with dementia has complicated my life.
- I have no time for others as a young person with caring responsibilities.
- I feel sorry for the person I help care for.
- Other people are better off than the person I help care for.
- Other _____

2. Activity

Which helpful thoughts do you have?

Below you will find a list of helpful thoughts.

Please check the helpful thoughts that you have.

- Sharing my feelings with others helps to take the pressure off.
- Asking for help from others can help me to share my caring responsibilities.
- Making time for myself to do the things I like doing helps me support my family better.
- Dementia is a disease; it is not my or anyone else's fault.
- I do not have to give others their way all the time.
- Other _____

What if Xavier instead thinks to himself, "if my teacher thinks I need help, he must care about me and my family and wants to make sure we are doing well"?

4. Check your understanding

Match feelings to a helpful thought

How does Xavier feel now?

Please check all the responses that you feel are appropriate.

- Angry
- Guilty
- Happy
- Lonely
- Sad
- Supported
- Upset

4. Check your understanding

Match feelings to a helpful thought

Xavier thought, "if my teacher thinks I need help, he must care about my father and want to make sure that we are doing well".

How does Xavier feel now?

This is a helpful thought that may make Xavier feel happy or supported.

Keep in Mind

Sometimes you cannot change the things that happen (events), but you can change your response (thoughts). Changing your unhelpful thoughts to helpful ones can make you feel better.

3. Thinking differently makes you feel better

You cannot change the things that happen, but you can change your response. In other words, you cannot change events but you can change your thoughts.

Example 1: Lim

Wei takes care of his wife Xu, who is living with dementia. They have a 14-year-old son, Gai, and a 16-year-old daughter, Lim who help care for Xu. Lim writes the following:

Name:	Lim
What was the event that made you feel upset or miserable?	On Friday afternoon my friends asked me if I fancied going to the cinema. I normally stay with mum after school on Fridays so my dad can have a break. I really wanted to go with my friends so my dad ended up having to stay home with mum. I felt very guilty and sad and didn't really enjoy the movie.
What were your unhelpful thoughts?	My dad will think that I don't care about mum and that I don't enjoy spending time with her. Both mum and dad will think that I rather be with my friends than with them.
What would be more helpful to think?	My parents love me and want me to be happy and enjoy spending time with my friends. They won't blame me for wanting to have fun. They know that I love them and that I enjoy spending time with them. My mum has dementia and is unable to think and act in the same way as she used to but we still have fun together.
How could the helpful thoughts make you feel?	Instead of feeling guilty and sad I would have felt happy about spending time with my friends.

Example 2: Kevin

Kevin is 13 years old. His dad is living with dementia. He writes the following:

Name:	Kevin
What was the event that made you feel upset or miserable?	Last week my parents came to watch me play football. My team won and I scored three goals. When we were driving home after the match I said to my dad, "that was a great match, did you see my goals?" He didn't answer, he said he wasn't sure because he could not remember what he had been doing. He said that he was tired and wanted to go home.
What were your unhelpful thoughts?	<i>Nothing I do can make my dad happy because he forgets everything. Everything is ruined because of his dementia.</i>
What would be more helpful to think?	Even though he cannot remember the match, I know that he enjoyed watching and that is what counts. He smiled a lot and was cheering for my team during the match.
How could the helpful thoughts make you feel?	Instead of feeling sad, I would have felt happy about the day we all spent together.

Now it's your turn. In the next exercise you can work to change your unhelpful thoughts into helpful ones.

Try to think of a recent event that made you feel upset and answer the questions below. You can refer back to the examples on the previous page for some help. You can either write this on a notepad or in the text box.

Name:	
What was the event that made you feel upset or miserable?	
What were your unhelpful thoughts?	
What would be more helpful to think?	
How could the helpful thoughts make you feel?	

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