

iSupport For Dementia Carers

Module 3 Caring for me



CARING FOR ME

Session 1. Reducing stress in everyday life

Session 2. Making time for pleasant 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 caring for another person. This session will help you to keep providing care.

How will this session help me?

This session helps 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. Relaxing at any time and any place.

1. The importance of relaxing

Let's look at an example

Cheryl: no time, no energy

Cheryl takes care of her husband Stephen who has dementia. She feels increasingly tense.

A friend advises her to try to relax and not ask too much of herself. Cheryl tells her friend that she does not have the time or energy to relax. Her friend explains that there are ways to relax that do not take much time, and that relaxing might give Cheryl renewed energy that could help her get tasks done more easily.

Cheryl succeeds in relaxing

Cheryl decides to follow her friend's advice and tries the breathing exercise her friend showed her.

When Cheryl sees her friend again she says: "Thank you for the good advice. Although I still have a lot to do, I feel less tense." Cheryl decides to do the breathing exercise every time she is feeling tense.

Relaxation:

- makes you feel less tense;
- might give you renewed energy;
- may make it easier to get tasks done; and
- 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 understand whether this type of relaxation helps you feel less tense.

In this session 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.).

Ask someone to read the exercises to you out loud.

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.



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:

- 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.

Let's look at an example

Cheryl: relaxing while waiting in line

Cheryl often feels tense when there is a long line in the store, as she is aware she still has many other things to do. She decides to do the breathing exercise while waiting in line.

Afterwards, she feels less tense.

You can also plan a specific time to relax, for example every day after lunch. You can choose what suits you best. If necessary, you can use a reminder to make sure that you do not forget to take some time to relax.

Keep in Mind

- You can take some time to relax anywhere and at any time of the day.
- 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, use a reminder).
- You will benefit from having renewed energy and a better mood after doing the relaxation exercises.
- Even a brief exercise can make a difference!
- You will also be able to reduce feelings of tension and continue caring for your family member or acquaintance over the long term.

Session 2. Making time for pleasant activities

Why is this session important?

It is important to take care of yourself while caring 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 activities to relax.

What will I learn?

1. The importance of pleasant activities.
2. Barriers to doing pleasant activities.
3. Making pleasant activities achievable.
4. Doing pleasant activities together.

1. The importance of pleasant activities

Pleasant activities are important because caregiving can last a long time and doing pleasant activities can help you to relax and continue providing care. Pleasant activities can be small things such as going for a walk or talking to a friend. This may not always be easy, because providing care can be time-consuming and someone might have to take over the care for your family member or acquaintance while you are not there.

Let's see how Stephanie, Michael, and Peter experience caregiving and the importance of planning pleasant activities.

Stephanie

Stephanie takes care of her mother who is living with dementia. She dedicates most of her time to caregiving and rarely takes time for herself. She does not engage in any pleasant activities. Stephanie notices that recently she is more tired than usual and feels that she is not able to care for her mother as she did before.

Michael

Michael takes care of his brother who is living with dementia. Michael does not get a lot of sleep and rarely has time for afternoon naps. He recently started asking his sister to come by and help with caregiving so he can take a nap and read a magazine each afternoon.

Peter

Peter takes care of his wife who is living with dementia. Recently, he has hired a professional carer who stops by three times a week to help him care for her. When the professional carer is there, Peter reads the newspaper or goes for a walk.

Remember

- If you are not able to make time for yourself, you can get very tired which may make you less able to continue providing care.
- You can ask family and friends to help care for the person living with dementia so that you can take some time for yourself.
- If it is affordable, you could hire a professional carer to help you care for your family member or friend so you can take some time for yourself.

Which pleasant 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.

1. 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.

- Do a crossword puzzle
- Watch TV
- Visit friends or family
- Cook
- Listen to music
- Do crafts
- Read
- Go shopping
- Take a walk
- Exercise
- Other 1 _____
- Other 2 _____

2. Barriers to doing pleasant activities

Let's go back to Stephanie's example

Stephanie dedicates most of her time to caring for her mother who has dementia. She does not receive any help and is tired all the time. She is struggling to care for her mother and has stopped doing the things she likes because she feels that she does not have enough time.

Eventually, Stephanie is so tired that she decides to ask her friend for help. She is now able to make some time for herself and engage in pleasant activities. Stephanie feels more energised afterwards. She also feels that she is better able to handle the care for her mother as a result.

Other reasons you may feel unable to do pleasant activities

Not having time was the reason that Stephanie did not feel as though she could do any pleasant activities.

However, there are several other reasons.

2. Activity

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 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. If you have little time, there are some pleasant activities that do not take up a lot of time and which you can fit in around your day.
- No energy.** You might have less energy because caregiving can be tiring. Although it is hard to imagine, it is likely that you will feel more energised after doing something you like.
- No money.** You might think that you have to spend lots of money to do something pleasant. Pleasant activities do not have to be costly. You can keep the activities as simple as you want them to be. For example, things like meeting a friend for a cup of tea or going for a walk by yourself do not cost money.
- Not in the mood.** You might not feel like doing pleasant activities. Although it is hard to imagine, it is likely that your mood will be better after doing something you like. On the other hand, not doing pleasant activities will likely worsen your mood.
- Physical limitations.** You might think that if you have physical limitations, you are not able to do a pleasant activity. If you have physical limitations, think of activities that you can do despite your limitations. There are many possibilities, such as reading, playing a game or talking to a friend.
- Guilt.** You might feel guilty because you will feel that you are running away from the person you care for. You need time to do things you like, relax and recharge so that you can provide adequate care for them. Being a good carer means taking care of yourself as well.

Suggestions for doing pleasant activities

- Consider asking someone to help you with some of your day-to-day tasks.
- Consider the impact of not doing certain tasks at that moment. For example, what is the impact of not cleaning the house every day? You may realise that you can be more flexible and have more time as a result.
- Try to do one activity at a time and finish the things you have started as much as possible. If you leave something unfinished, it may make you feel dissatisfied. You may not be able to focus entirely on your next activity. You could feel more energised if you complete an activity before taking on another.
- Think about ways to better manage your time. Consider using an agenda or calendar.
- Talk to someone about how you might be able to better manage your time. Seeking another opinion or suggestions may be helpful.

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 the activity 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.

- Do a crossword puzzle
- Watch TV
- Visit friends or family
- Cook
- Listen to music
- Do crafts
- Read
- Go shopping
- Take a walk
- Exercise
- Other 1 _____
- Other 2 _____

Which of your activities can you do today?

It is a good idea to start with your pleasant activities as soon as possible and incorporate them into your routine.

Which of your activities can you do today? If it is inconvenient to start an activity today, think about the pleasant activities you could do tomorrow.

Remember

Start with small goals and add more pleasant activities after you feel successful with your first try. Rethink the activities that you would like to do to help make them more achievable.

- Pleasant activities should be achievable.
- There are different reasons why you can feel that pleasant activities are not achievable.
- There are ways to undertake

4. Doing pleasant activities together

It can be very rewarding to do pleasant activities with the person that you care for. However, it might be difficult at first to think of pleasant activities that are 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 care for. First, take a look at Michael's experience from the previous exercise.

Michael

Michael takes care of his brother who is living with dementia. In addition to taking a nap while his sister takes care of his brother, Michael takes his brother out for walks around the neighbourhood. His brother enjoys the walks and Michael is also 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 that you can do with the person that you care for.

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 1 _____
- Other 2 _____

Keep in mind that despite the challenges, pleasant activities are good for you and are necessary to ensure that you are able to keep providing care to your family member or acquaintance.

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 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. Let's look at an example.

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:

- The person you care for becomes angry when you ask him/her something.
- Your family member who promised to help you does not turn up or cancels on you.
- The person you care for cannot find something.
- Your family member is blaming you for not providing the right care.

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

Joy is married to Max who is living with dementia. She is about to leave the house to visit a friend. Max says, "I can't find my keys! You cannot leave me without keys!" Joy thinks to herself: "I cannot leave him alone anymore." She starts to feel miserable.

1. Check your understanding

Imagine that you are living with dementia.

What do you think Joy should do?

Please check all the responses that you feel are appropriate.

- Tell Max that she cannot help him search now and leave.
- Search for the keys until she finds them.
- Tell Max that he should be more careful not to lose his keys in the future.
- Think to herself, "Max has dementia and is sometimes worried when he loses things. I can take some time to help and then go." Then call her friend and explain that she will come later.

1. Check your understanding

Imagine that you are living with dementia.

What do you think Joy should do?

✗ Tell Max she cannot help him search now and leave.

This is bad advice. Max has dementia and is feeling worried. He could be very upset if Joy leaves the house right now.

✗ Search for the keys until she finds them.

This could be helpful. Max might feel safer if he has the keys. However, this may mean Joy misses meeting her friend and is left feeling miserable.

✗ Tell Max that he should be more careful not to lose his keys in the future.

This is not such good advice. Max has dementia, he cannot help misplacing things.

✓ Think to herself, "Max has dementia and is sometimes worried when he loses things. I can take some time to help and then go." Then call her friend and explain that she will come later.

This is good advice. It is not the fact that Max has lost the keys that is making Joy miserable, but her concern that she always needs to help Max and cannot leave him alone anymore. After Joy has called her friend, she can help Max search for the keys, which will make him feel safer. Then she can go to see her friend.

Keep in Mind

- There are many different ways of dealing with events.
- Negative thoughts can make us feel bad.
- By thinking differently, you might feel better and be able to better deal with events.

Jo's unhelpful and helpful thoughts

Joy thinks to herself when Max cannot find his keys: "I cannot leave Max alone anymore." This makes her feel miserable.

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

Instead, Joy could think: "Max has dementia and is sometimes worried when he loses things. I can take some time to help and then go." This different way of thinking will probably make Joy feel better and help her stay calm and compassionate.

Helpful thoughts can make it easier to respond in useful ways to situations like these.

Keep in Mind

- It is not the event itself that makes you feel angry, sad, happy or miserable.
- Helpful or unhelpful thoughts can determine how you respond to a situation.
- By changing your thoughts, you could help change the way you feel.
- Unhelpful thoughts can make you feel bad.
- Helpful thoughts are important to feel better and will assist you in dealing with situations in a more useful way.
- To feel better, it is important to identify unhelpful thoughts.

Unhelpful thoughts make you feel bad

Mary has been caring for her family member who is living with dementia for several years now. 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 Mary's thoughts may help make her feel better?

Mary might think...

- Making time for myself helps me to provide better care.
- I am a bad carer if my family member is not always happy.
- Maybe the person living with dementia will become better.
- No one understands how hard it is to care.
- No one can provide the care the way I do.
- Asking others for help can help me to share the duties of care.
- 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 Mary's thoughts may help make her feel better?

✓ Making time for myself helps me to provide better care.

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 family member is not always happy. This thought will **make Mary 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, functional ability or personality.

✗ Maybe the person living with dementia will get better. This thought may **make Mary 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 Mary 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 the way I do. This thought could **make Mary 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 me to share care duties.

This is a helpful thought that may make Mary feel more in control. Involving other people in caregiving has lots of potential benefits. For instance, the carer 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

Robert meets his friend Beverly

Robert takes care of his father, who is living with dementia. While he is shopping, he meets his friend Beverly, who asks, "How are you? Do you need any help caring for your father?"

Robert thinks to himself, "if Beverly thinks I need help, she must think that I am a bad carer".

3. Check your understanding

How thoughts influence our feelings.

How do you think Robert is feeling?

Please check all the responses that you feel are appropriate.

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

Keep in Mind

Sometimes you cannot change the things that happen (events), but you can change your response (thoughts).

3. Check your understanding

How thoughts influence our feelings.

Robert thought, "if Beverly thinks that I need help, she must think I am a bad carer."

How do you think Robert is feeling?

This is an unhelpful thought that may make Robert feel:

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

What if Robert instead thinks to himself, "if Beverly thinks I need help, she must care about me and my father and wants to make sure we are doing well"?

4. Check your understanding

Match feelings to a helpful thought.

How does Robert 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.

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

How does Robert feel now?

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

1. Activity

Which unhelpful thoughts do you have?

In an earlier example you indicated which thoughts are helpful and which may be unhelpful. Below you will find a list of unhelpful thoughts.

Please check the unhelpful thoughts that you have or provide additional examples.

- I have to do everything alone.
- The person I care for does not care about me anymore.
- When the person I care for is not happy, it means that I am a bad carer.
- Maybe the person I care for will get better.
- I must always be available for the person I care for.
- I should not consider my own needs if I want to be a good carer.
- No one understands how hard it is to care.
- No one can provide care the way I do.
- He/she being diagnosed with dementia has complicated my life.
- I have no time for others as a carer.
- I feel sorry for the person I care for.
- Other people are better off than the person I care for and I.
- Other _____

2. Activity

Which helpful thoughts do you have?

In an earlier example you indicated which thoughts are helpful and which may be unhelpful. Below you will find a list of helpful thoughts.

Please check the helpful thoughts that you have or provide additional examples.

- It is okay to take time to relax as it will help me to provide a good standard of care.
- Sharing my feelings with others helps to take the pressure off.
- Asking for help from others can help me to share the burden of care.
- Making time for myself helps me to provide better care.
- 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 _____

Keep in Mind

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: James

James takes care of his wife Karen, who is living with dementia. He writes the following:

Name:	James
What was the event that made you feel upset or miserable?	Yesterday my wife Karen and I visited some friends. We had tea together. Karen dropped her cup on the floor. When they started to clean the floor, Karen did not help, but she stood in the way. She did not apologise for her behaviour, but laughed.
What were your unhelpful thoughts?	Our friends are upset with my wife and won't invite us to their house again.
What would be more helpful to think?	My wife has dementia and is unable to think and act in the same way that she used to. Our friends won't blame my wife as I have explained to them that she has dementia and that her thinking has declined.
How could the helpful thoughts make you feel?	Instead of feeling worried and ashamed, I would have felt happy about the day we spent with our friends.

Example 2: Helen

Helen takes care of her brother Paul, who is living with dementia. She writes the following:

Name:	Helen
What was the event that made you feel upset or miserable?	A week ago, our sister came to visit us. At the end of the day, I said to Paul, "it was a great day, don't you think?" Then he said that he was not sure, because he could not remember exactly what we had been doing. He said that he was tired and wanted to sleep.
What were your unhelpful thoughts?	Nothing we do is worthwhile because Paul forgets everything. Everything is ruined because of his dementia.
What would be more helpful to think?	Even though he cannot remember what we did, I know that he had a great day too, and that is what counts. He smiled a lot today and kept saying how nice it was that our sister came.
How could the helpful thoughts make you feel?	Instead of feeling sad and miserable, I would have felt happy about the day we spent with our sister.

Now it's your turn. In the next exercise you will 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.

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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