

FEROS CARE CARERS GUIDE





According to the Australian Government Department of Social Services, there are more than 2.65 million carers in Australia as of October 2022.

That's a lot of people across this country who are providing some form of care and support to ageing family members and loved ones, along with those living with disability, medical conditions and mental illness.

To be a carer is a very important role. There's no doubt that it can also be challenging at times, and can take a toll on health and wellbeing: after all, who cares for the carers?

Whether you are just starting in your role as a carer for a loved one, or have already been navigating this journey for some time, we've pulled together this carer's guide with some key resources and information from our experts.

We hope you find something in here that helps and acknowledges some of the tricky conversations or situations that await you.

And if we can ever support you, feel free to get in touch anytime on 1300 418 418. Our aged care experts are only ever a call away and can often advise how available services can provide you with additional support.



Melissa Simpson
Chief Customer Officer

DISCLAIMER

The material in this guide is intended for general education and information. It is not intended to replace professional advice from your GP or other medical professional. Please seek appropriate advice.

5 signs your ageing parent **NEEDS**

As your parent, loved one or close relative ages, you might start to notice some subtle changes. They may be more forgetful, have difficulty performing everyday tasks or seem withdrawn.

Many seniors try to hide these changes from their families because they wish to remain as independent as possible, so it can be difficult to tell when your parent needs help.

If you start to observe changes, try to monitor their behaviour and mental abilities regularly. As difficult as it can be to talk about care plans for the future, it's a good idea to have a discussion with your loved one to ensure you know their wishes.

Knowing the signs to look out for and the types of care available will help you prepare for the future.

If you notice any of the following signs, it could be time to look into care options and start the conversation:

- Difficulty performing activities of daily living, including bathing, toileting, grooming, walking, transferring, eating and drinking
- Neglecting household and personal responsibilities, including cleaning, decluttering, cooking, paying bills and taking medications
- Noticeable changes in physical appearance and functioning, including weight loss, poor personal hygiene and bruises or burns that could indicate falls
- Changes in mental capacity, including forgetfulness, confusion, poor judgement and decreased reasoning skills
- Mood and behaviour changes, including lack of motivation, apathy, low mood, agitation, mood swings and changes in sleeping patterns



MORE HELP

FIGURING OUT THE BEST TYPE OF AGED CARE FOR YOUR PARENT

If your loved one is simply recovering from a short-term illness or injury, they may be best suited for Short-Term Restorative Care (STRC): a free service funded by My Aged Care and aimed at recovery, which will help get your loved one moving and regaining their independence.

However, if your loved one has longer-term needs, it's worth looking into a Home Care Package. This is government supplied-funding for senior Australians needing care to stay independent at home for longer.

To help meet the different needs of seniors' personal circumstances, there are four different levels of Home Care Packages. Services might include house cleaning, garden maintenance, shopping, personal care, nursing, physiotherapy, pet care, companionship, transportation and more.

There's also the Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP), a Government-subsidised program for over 65s who just need a little bit of extra support to stay at home. The program provides subsidised home and community care services.

With a few different options, it can be tricky to tell which one is best. We can answer all your questions and advise the best funding for your parent – simply get in touch with us on **1300 418 418**.

ACCESSING GOVERNMENT-FUNDED AGED CARE SERVICES

You can check your loved one's eligibility for government funding by answering a few questions on the My Aged Care website. If they're eligible, they'll need to have an in-person assessment. Applying for an assessment online is quick and easy.



Private services are also available for people who don't meet the eligibility requirements, prefer not to get assessed or want to access care quickly while they're waiting for their government-funded services to be approved.

WE'RE HERE TO HELP

Whatever your loved one's situation, Feros Care is here to answer all your questions. You don't have to go it alone – our experienced and caring team is here to guide you smoothly through the process.

Once we know more, we can also equip you with more information for you to navigate the conversation with your loved one; for example, we can talk you through all the benefits of the services and programs available, share some of our good news stories and determine exactly what would best suit your individual circumstances.



**GIVE US A CALL TODAY
ON 1300 418 418.**

How to help someone WHO DOESN'T WANT HELP

Many seniors initially refuse outside help, even when it's clear they need it, because they're afraid of losing their independence. Here are six tips to help you convince your parent or loved one to accept help that will improve their quality of life.

Have you tried to approach a parent or loved one about getting help around their home but have been rebuffed? Perhaps they answered "I don't need help" or "I'm fine!", but deep down you know they need some assistance.

Whether you're one of the 2.65 million Australians who provide unpaid care and it's becoming too much, or you're not able to provide care to your parent and need outside help, it's a conversation that needs to be addressed carefully.

The Feros Care team has a wealth of experience having these types of conversations with ageing loved ones and their families. Here are our top six tips to help you pull it off successfully.

1 FIND THE RIGHT TIME TO TALK

Choose a moment when they seem calm and you're unlikely to be interrupted. Explain that you'd like to have a chat about the future so you can understand their wishes and that you'll listen openly and respectfully to everything they have to say.

While the conversation may be tense or emotional at times, do your best to stay calm and listen to their point of view without interrupting them.

2 ASK QUESTIONS

They may become defensive if you point out all the ways you feel they've changed and are unable to take care of themselves. A positive starting

point is to ask them whether they're finding some activities of daily living more difficult than they used to.

If they say everything is fine, you can gently point out some of your observations. You might say, "I noticed it seems more difficult for you to walk up the stairs now" or "This is a big house and cleaning it all by yourself is a big task."

3 AVOID JUDGEMENT

While any behavioural changes might seem obvious to you, your loved one might be in denial or having a hard time accepting they're ageing. Using supportive and non-judgmental language will reduce the risk of them reacting negatively or shutting you out.

Instead of saying, "Mum, you can't even cook meals for yourself anymore," try, "I can see how much effort it is for you to cook now and I'd love to get you some help to make your life easier."

4 FOCUS ON HOW THE SITUATION IS AFFECTING YOU

Many parents and grandparents don't want to be a burden on their children, so delicately explaining how the situation is affecting you may help them understand why they need to accept outside help.

You could say, "I'm worrying a lot about this and I'd feel a lot better if you had home care a couple of days a week" or "You know I'll always be here

to help you, but I'm finding it hard to juggle work, the kids and helping you, so I'd love to get some home care for you."

5 DO YOUR RESEARCH BEFOREHAND

Having some information on hand about the different aged care options available will help everyone get a better understanding of the process. There are four different levels of government-funded Home Care Packages to help your parent stay in their home for longer. Another option is the government-subsidised Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP) that offers support to over 65s who only need a little extra help at home.

You can check eligibility for government funding by answering a few questions on the My Aged Care website. With wait times of three to six months for most government subsidies, it pays to apply before the need is urgent. If your loved one needs immediate care or doesn't meet the eligibility requirements, private services are also available.

It might also help to explain that getting in-home care early on leads to better outcomes. When the need for assistance is left too long, a fall or other health event might occur that forces your parent to go straight into an aged care home. Early intervention may allow your loved one to live comfortably in their home for longer.

6 ENLIST OUTSIDE HELP

If your loved one is still resistant to getting help, it could be useful to enlist the help of a health or aged care professional. Their GP will be able to evaluate your parent's changing needs and make recommendations. Hearing it from a health professional may convince your parent to accept help.

You can also contact the Feros Care team for advice and support before you begin the conversation. Our experienced and caring team will explain all the available aged care options in easy-to-understand terms. We can guide your family every step of the way to make the process as smooth and stress-free as possible.



**FOR MORE HELP, GIVE US A
CALL TODAY ON 1300 418 418.**

The aged care cheat sheet: HCP, STRC AND CHSP PROGRAMS EXPLAINED

Convinced that someone you love needs more help at home? Maybe you're not sure where to begin, even if you receive aged care services yourself.

The aged care process can be confusing, which is why we have put together a comprehensive aged care cheat sheet, with information on the three major programs – Home Care Packages, Commonwealth Home Support Program, and Short-Term Restorative Care.

If you are looking into home care services and programs for yourself or a loved one, it can be time-consuming and confusing trying to understand how one program differs from another.

In particular, the Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP), Home Care Package (HCP) and Short Term Restorative Care (STRC) can appear very similar at a glance.

Let's break it down in simple terms so that the differences are crystal clear.

DIFFERENT CARE CATEGORIES

Aged care programs fall into one of the following categories:

- **Help At Home** including the Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP) and Home Care Packages (HCP)
- **Short Term Help** including Short Term Restorative Care (STRC), and
- **Residential Aged Care**

There are also other programs within these categories, such as Veterans Services, the Transitional Care Program and more. We'll talk about those later.

● HELP AT HOME

Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP)

This program is designed to assist those who are having trouble doing everyday activities without help, and who need low care support to remain living independently in the community.

Home Care Package (HCP)

These packages provide a greater level of support than the Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP). Home Care Packages offer regular assistance to help you stay healthy, active, connected and living in your own home.

What's the same?

- Both programs (as well as Short Term Restorative Care) require you to register with My Aged Care, complete a free assessment, and have your funding eligibility determined to access services
- Both programs are carried out in your home. You are not eligible if you are in residential aged care
- Both programs include services such as personal care, domestic assistance, meal preparation, transport, social transport, exercise and mobility programs, minor home modifications, allied health services, nursing services, remote nursing support, home and garden maintenance, pet care, technology home solutions, and respite services





What's different?

- Who conducts the assessment: A CHSP is assessed by your local Regional Assessment Service (RAS). HCPs are assessed by your local Aged Care Assessment Team (ACAT).
- Who picks the services provided: A HCP is driven by you – you decide which services you need and how your funds are spent.
- Levels of support: A CHSP offers entry-level support only. In contrast, a HCP offers more complex and comprehensive support options, ranging from Level 1 to Level 4 depending on how much care is needed. For example, Level 1 is suitable for those with basic care needs, whereas Level 4 is for those with high care needs.
- Funds provided: Being a lower-level program, a CHSP entitles you to a maximum of \$8k per annum with the average person receiving \$2.6k p.a. As HCPs are more comprehensive and offer different package levels, you are entitled to between \$9k and \$51k, with the average person receiving \$19k per annum.
- Income assessment – yay or nay: An income assessment is not required for a CHSP, however to qualify for a HCP, you may need to contribute financially if your income is over a certain amount.
- Costs: CHSP fees are negotiated with the individual service providers. HCPs, on the other hand, have two types of fees that may apply: a basic daily fee, and an income tested care fee (again, only if your income is over a certain amount).

So as you can see, there are some key differences between the three programs, with suitability dependant on individual circumstances and support needs.



● SHORT TERM HELP

Short Term Restorative Care (STRC)

This is a temporary eight-week program designed to help you recover from an injury or illness. It aims to improve your wellbeing and help you remain independent.

Services may include (but are not limited to): personal care, domestic assistance, meal preparation, transport, exercise and mobility programs, home modification assessments, home and garden maintenance, occupational therapy, psychology and counselling, podiatry, nursing services, and technology home solutions.

How is it different to a CHSP and a HCP?

- It isn't an ongoing program. Services are time-limited to eight-weeks.
- It doesn't have to be delivered at home. If you are staying short term in residential aged care, you are also eligible.
- The costs are different. The basic care fee is calculated at 17.5% of the single basic aged pension rate. Your Short Term Restorative Care provider can discuss this with you if you think you cannot afford it.

Please note: While the government subsidises Short Term Restorative Care, you'll be expected to contribute to the cost of your care if you can afford it.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO FIND OUT MORE, INCLUDING A FULL BREAKDOWN OF OTHER SERVICES SUCH AS VETERANS SERVICES, YOU CAN DOWNLOAD OUR FULL AGED CARE GUIDE:

feroscare.com.au/agedcareguide

Stress management for carers

HOW TO AVOID CARER BURNOUT

Whether you're just helping out at home every once in a while or whether you are a full time carer, stress management can be challenging sometimes. Make sure you take time out to look after yourself in order to reduce the negative effects of stress and avoid carer burnout with these stress management tips.

Do you ever feel drained, underappreciated, or simply exhausted? Everyday life can be stressful enough, but when you add the responsibility of caring for a friend or family member, that stress can become harder to manage. Caregiver burnout is definitely a thing. To avoid getting to that point, follow these effective ways to reduce everyday symptoms of stress, which in turn will improve your physical and emotional health.

First things first: you have your own life to take care of! No matter how important it is to you to look after your loved one, keep in mind that in some situations, you come first. It isn't selfish or wrong of you to take time out every once in a while to recharge. Carer burnout is very real – we understand that caring for a loved one, possibly with dementia or other illnesses, involves different stressors, from the workplace to family and caregiver duties. That's why we are here to help out.

You may not notice the effects of carer stress at first. Perhaps you're having regular headaches, your muscles are tense or sore and you have difficulty sleeping. As time goes on, you feel irritable often, can't concentrate, and decision making becomes more difficult.

Neuro endocrinologist and professor at Stanford University Robert Sapolsky has studied stress for

over three decades. As he describes it, "for normal mammal, stress is about three minutes of terror."

Sarah, 49, couldn't agree more.

"As a carer, I often find myself in situations I can't escape from, or I think I can't escape from. I feel anxious and stressed, and I can never seem to make reasonable decisions in such a state."

WHAT DOES STRESS DO TO YOUR BODY?

We all know what stress feels like. But do you know what exactly it does to you? During a stressful encounter, our lungs work overtime to get oxygen into our body, our blood pressure and blood sugar rise, and anything that's not essential gets turned off, such as ovulation, digestion, or tissue repair. After the stressor disappears, the system returns to normal.

Biologically, we are not meant to be under extreme stress all the time. To balance the stress associated with work, relationships and family duties, as well as being the caregiver to a parent with dementia or a loved one with a disability, is a difficult task – we know.

Unremitting stress can do a lot of damage, and the stress response is more damaging than the stressor itself, says Saplosky.



Chronic, low-level stress kills brain cells, adds fat to our bellies, and makes us age faster. It increases the risk of depression and a whole host of mental and/or physical illnesses.

“I think our lack of routine switch-off time is one of the most pressing issues in modern society... for your health, it could hardly be more critical,” says Dr Rangan Chatterjee, UK medical doctor and author of *The 4 Pillar Plan: How to relax, eat, move and sleep your way to a longer, healthier life states*.

Sarah often finds herself in a similar situation, where her tasks take precedence over me-time.

“Being a carer is challenging at the best of times. I often find myself thinking of relaxation as a treat that I have to work for, but deep down I know I should do things differently. After all, if I don’t take care of myself, how am I supposed to take care of others?”

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO REDUCE STRESS AND AVOID CARER BURNOUT?

You know you’re stressed. You know it’s not good for you. But how can you relieve stress? You don’t want to reach a point of caregiver burnout, but it’s also impossible to eliminate all stressors when you’re a carer – or it certainly feels like it. However, there are steps you can take to reduce the effects they have on you. If you cannot change your circumstances, you can still change your body’s reaction to stress. There are many techniques that help manage chronic stress and remind your body what it’s like to not be under constant attack. And in the technology era, it’s little wonder that there’s also an app for that.



TIME OUT – TAKE A WALK, LISTEN TO MUSIC, OR READ A BOOK

Because he’s seen such positive results, Dr Chatterjee now regularly prescribes ‘me-time’ for his patients. “For at least 15 minutes, every day, and if possible, stop everything, and be utterly selfish,” he says. “Stop treating ‘relaxation’ as something that you do – or more likely, don’t do – when everything else has been dealt with.”

He urges us to make relaxation a part of our schedule. It can be as simple as sitting in a room and listening to your favourite music, doing a hobby, reading a book, having a relaxing bath, or taking a 15 minute walk at some point of the day.

Whatever you do, do it without your smartphone, tablet, or computer and, as Dr Chatterjee says, “never feel guilty about it.”



PHYSICAL ACTIVITY – EXERCISE OR STRETCH

Exercise can help stop the build-up of stress. A brisk walk shortly after feeling stressed will deepen your breathing and help relieve muscle tension. Other activities such as yoga and tai chi combine fluid movements with deep breathing and mental focus, which can also induce calm.



SOCIAL CONNECTION – SPEND TIME WITH FRIENDS AND FAMILY

We’re wired to seek out others just as much as we are to find food, water and shelter.

Levels of stress hormone cortisol tend to be higher in lonely people, and the effects of feeling unconnected can be compared to smoking, and are often more damaging than obesity.

So schedule in social time – connect socially to your workmates, and make sure to prioritise friends and family in your week.

STRESS MANAGEMENT

Pick at least one of the tips above, set a reminder on your phone for every day, and dedicate as much time to it as you can. Start small – make time for a 10-minute walk outside or a short stretching session. Keep pushing yourself – allow a 30-minute window each day to read or to participate in an exercise class, or organise a lunch date with a friend every few days.

You may not be able to eliminate stress altogether – however, you can make sure that you’re taking the appropriate measures to stay on top of your own health as well as those you care for. Remember, community support and respite care are available to you at any time. Make sure you know when to ask for help yourself. And if it ever gets too much for you to handle alone, contact the team at Feros Care to figure out what your next step should be.



FOR MORE HELP, GIVE US A CALL TODAY ON 1300 418 418.

Are you caring for someone?

SUPPORT SERVICES FOR CARERS

Feros Care can support you to look after the person you care for. We have a number of support services and care packages that can offer you a break from physical tasks such as personal care (showering and dressing), housework, shopping for the person, popping in to check that they are ok, daily phone monitoring, and taking them out socially. Our caring staff can spend time with them so you can go out or have some time to yourself.

Virtual Social Centre

The Virtual Senior Centre is a vibrant online community for seniors who value meeting people, staying connected, having new experiences and want to do all this from the comfort of home.

FIND OUT MORE
feroscare.com.au/vsc



CES



Residential Respite Care

Being a carer can be incredibly rewarding but sometimes you might need a break to go and do your own thing. Maybe you're heading off on a trip, working, or catching up with things around the house. Whatever it might be, a short term break in a residential respite facility can help.

FIND OUT MORE

feroscare.com.au/respite



5 best apps for CAREGIVER STRESS RELIEF

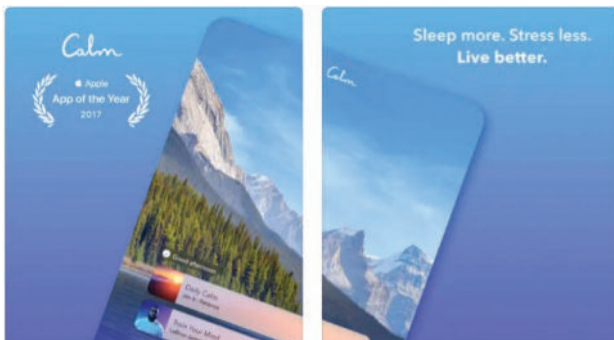
Carer stress is real and caring for someone is hard work. It can leave you feeling overwhelmed, exhausted, and isolated – but these apps can help.



Calm



#1 APP FOR MEDITATION AND SLEEP



Calm includes guided meditations to help manage anxiety, stress, and sleep better. Their sleep stories are genius – who wouldn't want to fall asleep listening to Bob Ross or Stephen Fry?

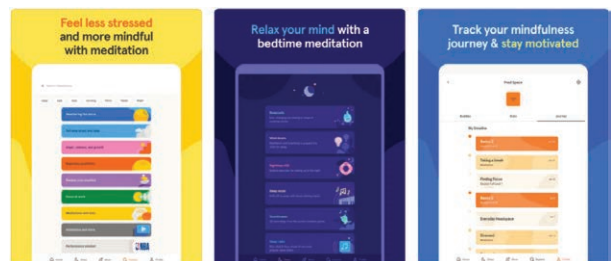
The app has a free trial or a premium subscription for more relaxing content.

Our recommendation: Try the Deep Sleep Release guided meditation for a better night's sleep or Emergency Calm for those situations when you start to panic and you need a quick solution.

Headspace



GREAT INTRODUCTION TO GUIDED MEDITATION



It's easy to get stuck in your head. Headspace is a comprehensive meditation app, including themed sessions for stress or anxiety, to help focus, short meditations for those of us who are time-poor (always!), and even SOS exercises for sudden meltdowns.

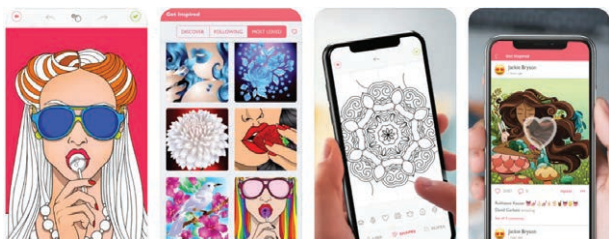
Like with Calm, there is a free and a subscription version, but with the amount of content available, the subscription is definitely worth the money.

Our recommendation: Headspace is great for beginners, as it has an introduction to mindful meditation. Try the free trial to get a feel for it, and only invest in it if you like what you hear.

Colorfy



RELIVE YOUR CHILDHOOD



Colorfy is a colouring therapy app that promotes a relaxed way to pass the time. You can immerse yourself in the blissful world of digital painting. It's a wonderful way to take your mind off of things.

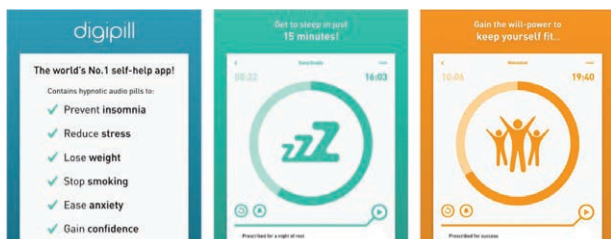
There is a free trial, however, the premium version offers more colours and pictures to choose from.

Our recommendation: Suitable for both you and your Loved One. Either colour in alone, or share the iPad with your LO to complete together – guaranteed quiet time.

Digipill



KEEP TRACK OF YOUR LIFE



Digipill is another great tool for keeping you mental health in check. It not only offers guided relaxation and an 'audio pill' for reducing stress, but methods for approaching real life problems as well. You can choose to increase motivation, lose weight, stop smoking, or prevent insomnia. All of these contribute to a better, healthier mental life. It's also great for keeping track of your mindful minutes.

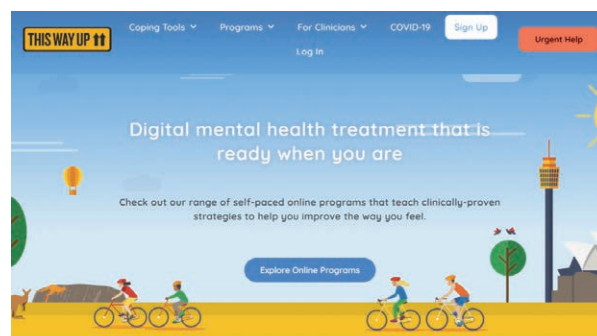
There is a free 'pill' as well, so you can try before you buy.

Our recommendation: Make sure you listen to the free audio before you start buying others left and right, as some people seem to dislike the voice.

This Way Up



A WEBSITE FOR MENTAL ILLNESSES



This Way Up is a website. It's a research-based, comprehensive collection of techniques for dealing with different mental illnesses. Their tagline is 'take control of your wellbeing', and they have amazing cognitive behavioural therapy courses for anxiety, depression, and other mental health disorders.

While the phone app isn't free, signing up and accessing the online app for stress management is! Make sure you give it a go.

Our recommendation: If you are seeing a guidance counsellor or GP about managing your stress, this website is worth recommending, as your GP can also participate in your program.

EXTRA

Fitbit Relax

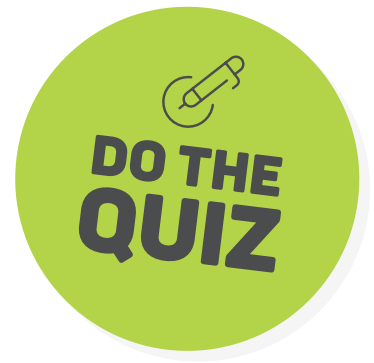
Fitbits now have a feature called Relax, which provides deep breathing sessions throughout your day. The Fitbit uses your heart rate to recommend a personalised breathing pattern – I have found this extremely useful time and time again. Sometimes, all we need is to take a deep breath, and your watch reminding you of this is a great feature.

Remember, these stress relief apps can only help so much. If you need some time off from caring to recharge those batteries, don't be afraid to ask for help.



CHECK OUT AVAILABLE RESPITE CARE SERVICES SO YOU CAN CONTINUE LIVING A HEALTHY AND FULFILLING LIFE AS A CARER, VIA feroscare.com.au

THE CAREGIVER STRAIN INDEX



At Feros Care, we use a tool with our clients called the Caregiver Strain Index (CSI), developed by The Gerontological Society of America. It takes less than five minutes to complete.

A score of 7 or greater indicates higher levels of stress and means it may be a good time to follow up with a trusted care professional for advice.

BELOW IS A LIST OF THINGS WHICH OTHER PEOPLE HAVE FOUND TO HAVE DIFFICULTY WITH WHEN HELPING CARE FOR A RELATIVE/FRIEND.

PLEASE ANSWER YES OR NO BY PLACING A TICK IN THE APPROPRIATE COLUMN		YES	NO
1	Sleep is disturbed because _____ is in and out of bed or wanders around the house	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2	It is inconvenient because (e.g. helping takes so much time or its a long drive over to help)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3	It is a physical strain (e.g. because helping in and out of chair, effort or concentration required)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4	It is confining (e.g. helping restricts free time or cannot go visiting)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5	There have been family adjustments (e.g. because helpig has disrupted routine, there has been no privacy)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6	There have been changes in personal plans (e.g. had to turn down a job; could not go on vacation)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7	There have been other demands on my time (e.g. from other family members)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8	There have been other emotional adjustments (e.g. because of severe arguments)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9	Some behaviour is upsetting (e.g. because of incontinence; _____ has trouble remembering things; _____ accuses people of taking things)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10	It is upsetting to find _____ has changed so much from him/her former self (e.g. he/she is a different person than he/she used to be)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11	There have been work adjustments (e.g. having to take off)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12	It is a financial strain	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13	Feeling completely overwhelming (e.g. because of worry about _____ concerns about how you will manage)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

TOTAL SCORE COUNT OF 'YES' RESPONSES = _____



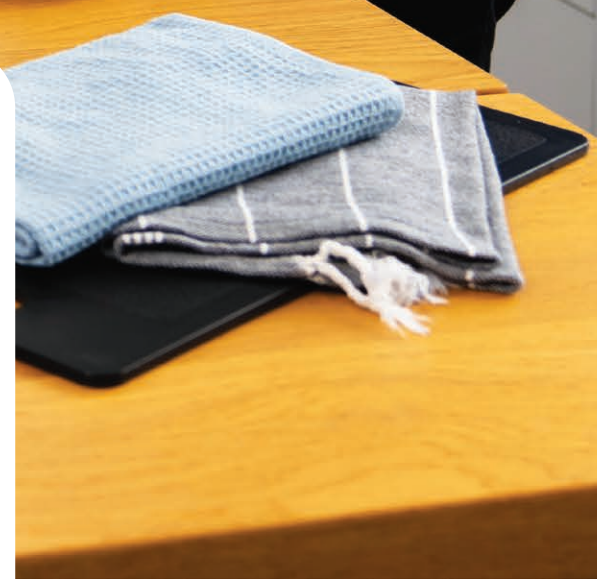
MY SCORE WAS ABOVE SEVEN. WHAT DO I DO NEXT?

This depends on your current situation. If your loved one already has a Home Care Package with Feros Care, it's a good idea to start a conversation with their Wellbeing Manager about increasing the support available to you.



IF YOU OR YOUR LOVED ONE ARE NOT A CLIENT WITH FEROS CARE, IT MAY BE TIME TO INVESTIGATE HOW WE CAN HELP. VISIT HERE TO FIND OUT MORE:
feroscare.com.au/homecare

The Carer Gateway is also a great resource for carers. Find them at carergateway.gov.au or call **1800 422 737**.



I KNOW MUM IS OKAY AND I DON'T HAVE TO WORRY

How our Home Care Packages help support caregiver children

61-year-old Cheryl Abolderrow has been looking after her mum, Norma Sommerfeld, since she was about 15 years old.

When Cheryl's dad and brother both passed away, Norma moved in with Cheryl, her husband and her daughter – and she's been there ever since.

"Mum's been unwell for a long time," Cheryl says. "She had a few falls, ended up in hospital, and the hospital staff told her that she should go into care at a nursing home. She was adamant that she wouldn't be going. She said to me – 'if you put me in there I will die'. So, we had to make it work somehow."

Norma is 88 now, on a Level 4 (highest level) Home Care Package, and has lived in Cheryl's house for 14 years. She has the master bedroom with its ensuite, with plenty of room for her recliner, television and her bed. Norma spends most of her time watching television, or eating meals with the rest of the family, but does require 24/7 care.

"You do have to do everything. She doesn't walk, so you have to take her to the loo. As she has aged, she has got a bit of dementia, so she has lost a lot of ability," Cheryl says.

HOW FEROS CARE CAN HELP

With her Home Care Package, Norma can access a variety of equipment for her needs, including her recliner, a wheelchair, a special bed, a shower chair and even the equipment used to move her from the bed to the bathroom.

Care workers attend each day to help with Norma's grooming and offer Cheryl a bit of respite from her intense caring schedule.

"They shower her every day, which is a big help," Cheryl says. "I know that mum is here being looked after and I can go out to pay the bills, or go have a coffee, and not have to worry. I look forward to having that time to myself every week."

Norma enjoys the visits; the care workers might play some bingo with her or take her out on the deck to enjoy the sunshine. "She always seems to have a good time," Cheryl adds, "she's responsive, a bit more alert."



AS A CARER, SELF-CARE IS KEY

Norma's Feros Care Wellbeing Manager – also called Cheryl (Rayner) - has been working with both Norma and daughter Cheryl A for years. She knew that Cheryl A had given up a lot in the home to meet Norma's care needs and soon realised that it wasn't just Norma that could use some support from Feros Care.

"I was having medical treatment in town, and was short on time. One day, I came in, and Cheryl Rayner said – 'are you okay? You just don't seem like yourself.' I was hot and flustered, and she said, 'I think you probably need a bit more time to yourself,'" Cheryl A explains.

Cheryl R arranged the in-home respite so that Cheryl A and her husband could have a bit more self-care time. Cheryl A can now go to her medical appointments without stress, and she even has the time to sit and have a coffee afterwards. On the weekends, she and her husband now enjoy a 'date lunch' or get their shopping done.

"I don't think we realise how important self-care is to each and every one of us," Cheryl R explains. "Carer's burnout is real, and it needs to be addressed. Especially with what we're calling the 'sandwich generation', getting pulled in both directions between their children and their ageing parents."

WE'RE INSPIRED TO HELP EVERYONE WE CAN

Wellbeing Manager Cheryl R's personal background as a long-time carer and supporter has given her personal perspective on what really matters to people.

"I've been in that situation myself, making the decision to put loved ones into care or not – and Cheryl A could've made that choice quite some time ago but has chosen not to. As a result, we're very happy to give her the chance to be supported in that carer role."

Cheryl A agrees that keeping her mother at home is "100% better": "I think being with the family makes a big difference. They feel that they have that security, the familiarity."



"Being with Feros has made it so easy. Cheryl will give you options – she doesn't just say, 'oh we will do this. She will say, maybe we can do something, or something else.' And there's no trouble with the process. If there's something I'm not sure about – I give them a ring and they talk me through it."

"It's just wonderful that they're here supporting me. Otherwise I wouldn't get out to do the things I like, or need, to do. And it makes me happier by doing it."



GO HERE TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT HOW FEROS CARE CAN HELP:

feroscare.com.au/homecare

3 things you didn't know about **PALLIATIVE CARE**

Angie is a Wellbeing Manager with Feros Care, and has been a Registered Nurse for almost 30 years. She has a post-graduate degree in Palliative Care, having been inspired by the many people she has supported through palliative care. This is her story.

As a Registered Nurse working in emergency and surgical settings, I was always exposed to death.

I quickly came to realise that death is never the same for anyone. It brings its own set of unique challenges and needs to each person. It is complex, it is emotional, it is part of life.

With palliative care, we have the opportunity to plan how a person can live their best life with a life-limiting diagnosis. It's like giving them the most valuable gifts.

Here are three things I'd like to share about palliative care.

1 PALLIATIVE CARE IS NOT JUST ABOUT THE END OF LIFE

There is a myth that palliative care hastens death, and this is something I would like to see busted.

Palliative care is about quality of life and comfort care. It is an approach to care that enables a person to live their best life considering their circumstances – encompassing symptom control with social needs.

It is not about cure, but equally, not about causing death prematurely. And the palliative approach is effective for any life-limiting diagnosis, not just at the end of life.

To reflect on this, I have a favourite quote I like to share with families, by Ann Richardson – “We cannot change the outcome, but we can affect the journey.”

2 IT'S OKAY TO GRIEVE EARLY - BUT THERE IS A LOT OF SUPPORT

If you have a loved one who is going into palliative care, you have permission to start grieving early. You will need a hand to hold, and you will need to know that there are people you can trust.

As nurses, we care about you and your family, your friends, your entire support network. We care about assessment and careful symptom management. We have ways to manage pain, and end-of-life symptoms can be managed well these days.



3 YOUR NURSES CARE MORE THAN YOU EVEN REALISE

I still remember the turning point that sent me back to university to specialise in palliative care.

I was working with a young palliative mother. Through all the devastation, her goal was to have a message for her then-10-year-old daughter to be delivered to her on her 21st birthday.

I worked with her to buy a card and write out her memories and messages on the card. Then I helped her to gather photographs and place them all with an important piece of jewellery, neatly wrapped in a shoe box and tied up with a bow.

The box was given to her husband for safe keeping, and it was the greatest gift I have ever been involved in.

It's what made me realise that the biggest rewards of my life, and career, were to put little bits of sunshine back into the lives of my patients. It's what adds meaning to my job and makes it a vocation for me.



TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT HOW OUR NURSES CAN SUPPORT YOU THROUGH FEROS CARE, GO HERE:
feroscare.com.au/carersupport



NAVIGATING GRIEF

Tips to help you after the death of a loved one



The death of a loved one is generally life's most painful and stressful event, and our reactions to death are still one of society's least understood and most off-limits topics.

Once the necessary arrangements have been made and broader family and friends go back to their normal life, the bereaved are often left feeling alone and isolated.

An immensely painful but natural emotion following death, grief can be likened to an open wound as it tends to heal slowly and at times, feels like it may never go away.

We know, however, that the feelings of devastation and incompleteness do start to fade with time, despite being all-consuming in the beginning.

Healing is a process of allowing ourselves to feel, experience and accept the pain. In other words, we need to give ourselves permission to heal. Allowing acceptance of these feelings is the beginning of that process.

THE GRIEVING PROCESS

When we experience a major loss, grief is the normal and natural way our mind and body react.

Everyone grieves differently but at the same time, there are commonalities. For example, someone experiencing grief usually moves through a series of emotional stages, such as shock, numbness, guilt, anger and denial.

Physical responses are also typical and include sleeplessness, mood swings, inability to eat or concentrate, lack of energy, and lack of interest in activities previously enjoyed.

As cliché as it sounds, often time is the biggest healer. As the days, weeks and months go by,

you will move through emotional and physical reactions that lead toward acceptance, healing and getting on with life as fully as possible.

That being sad, it is completely natural to feel overwhelmed during the grieving process. Here are some tips to help you manage your grief and reduce its emotional and physical impacts.

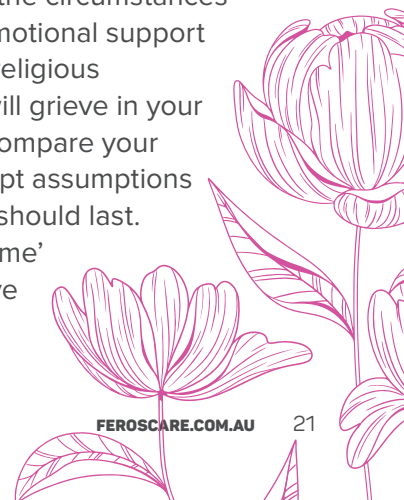
"Grief is a most peculiar thing; we're so hopeless in the face of it. It's like a window that will simply open of its own accord. The room grows cold, and we can do nothing but shiver. But it opens a little less each time, and a little less; and one day we wonder what has become of it."

- ARTHUR GOLDEN

REALISE YOUR GRIEF IS UNIQUE

No-one will grieve in the exact same way.

Your experience will be influenced by a variety of factors, including the relationship you had with the person who passed away, the circumstances surrounding the death, your emotional support system, and your cultural and religious background. As a result, you will grieve in your own special way. Don't try to compare your experience with others' or adopt assumptions regarding how long your grief should last. Instead, take a 'one-day-at-a-time' approach allowing you to grieve at your own pace.



TALK ABOUT YOUR GRIEF

Express your grief openly, as this is a normal part of the grief journey and an important step in the healing process.

Ignoring your grief won't make it go away and despite what you may think, talking often makes you feel better.

Allow yourself to speak from your heart and never feel that this means you are losing control or going "crazy".

DEVELOP SUPPORT SYSTEMS WITH THE RIGHT PEOPLE

Reaching out to others and accepting support can be difficult for many people. One of the best ways to encourage healing, however, is to establish a support system of caring friends and relatives.

Find people who encourage you to be yourself and acknowledge your feelings, and avoid those who are critical or try to downplay your grief. Comments like "keep your chin up", "carry on", or "be happy" may be well intended, but unfortunately can often have the opposite effect.

It can also be especially healing to talk to those who have lost loved ones from the same cause/s, as they can understand and relate to what you are going through.

EXPECT TO FEEL A VARIETY OF EMOTIONS

Experiencing a loss affects your head, heart and spirit. You may experience a variety of emotions as part of the grieving process, including confusion, disorganisation, fear, guilt, relief, and/or explosive emotions to name a few.

Sometimes these emotions will follow each other within a short period of time, or they may occur simultaneously. Either way, they are completely normal and healthy.

Don't be surprised if out of nowhere you suddenly experience surges of grief, even at the most unexpected times. These grief attacks can be frightening and leave you feeling overwhelmed but remember, they are a natural response to the passing of a loved one.

BE KIND TO YOURSELF

Feelings of loss and sadness will probably leave you fatigued. Your ability to think clearly and make decisions may be impaired and your lower energy levels may slow you down.

Respect what your body is telling you. Nurture yourself, get lots of rest, eat balanced meals, and lighten your schedule as much as you can.

Caring for yourself doesn't mean feeling sorry for yourself. It means using your survival skills, accepting your feelings, having compassion, and asking for help when you need it.

ALLOW FOR NUMBNESS

Feeling dazed or numb when someone you loved passes away is often part of your early grief experience.

This numbness serves a valuable purpose: it gives your emotions time to catch up with what your mind has told you. This in turn helps create insulation from the reality of the passing, until you are able to tolerate what you don't want to believe.



ACKNOWLEDGE THE IMPORTANCE OF THE FUNERAL RITUAL

The funeral ritual does more than commemorate the passing of a loved one. It is a way to express your grief, gain support from people who care, and establish some sort of 'closure'.

If you eliminate this ritual, you often set yourself up to repress feelings which is an unhealthy and potentially harmful practise.

Also, be aware that if you decide against a funeral, it means others will not have the chance to pay tribute to a person they cared deeply for.

TREASURE MEMORIES

Memories are the most priceless legacy when someone passes away.

Don't block them out, instead treasure and share them with family and friends. Recognise that your memories may make you laugh or cry but are a lasting part of the relationship you shared with that special person.

SEARCHING FOR MEANING

You may find yourself asking, "Why did they die?" "Why this way?" "Why now?"

The search for meaning is another normal part of the healing process, with some questions that can be answered and others which remain open. Healing, however, ultimately occurs in the opportunity to pose the questions, not necessarily in answering them.

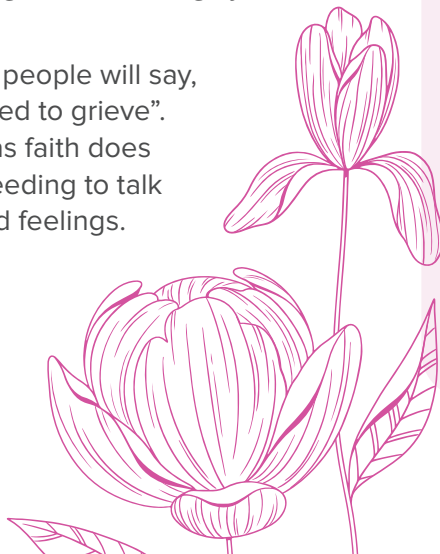
Finding a supportive friend or community who will listen and provide empathy as you search for meaning is immensely helpful.

EMBRACE YOUR SPIRITUALITY

If faith is a part of your life, surround yourself with people who support your beliefs and won't be critical of whatever thoughts and feelings you need to explore.

You may find that some people will say, "with faith, you don't need to grieve". Be very mindful of this as faith does not insulate you from needing to talk about your thoughts and feelings.

Express your faith but remember to express your grief as well.



This is an excerpt from the Feros Care Bereavement Guide, which can be found here: feroscare.com.au/bereavement



Download and read it, or go through the website, to find information on the following:

- What to do when a loved one passes away
- Who to notify about a loved one's death
- Arranging a loved one's funeral
- Sorting through a loved one's possessions after a funeral
- A step-by-step guide to selling a deceased estate
- Navigating grief: Tips to help you after the death of a loved one
- Where to find guidance when a loved one passes away

There is a lot to think about during this time, but we hope this information provides some clarity regarding what happens/what needs to happen when a loved one first passes away.



The Feros Scoop



LET'S STAY IN TOUCH

Sign up for our monthly newsletter – **The Feros Scoop** – to receive our latest stories delivered straight to your inbox.



SUBSCRIBE TO THE FEROS SCOOP
feroscare.com.au/stayintouch

 **feros care**
GROW BOLD