



Taking Care of Yourself

Your role as a foster carer, family or significant other carer, although rewarding, can also be demanding and challenging. While having well developed routines, making time for yourself and accessing supports all help to reduce stress, some stress is unavoidable.

It is important to know how to take care of yourself and how to recognise the signs that you need time to refresh and recharge. Self-care is very important for you to be able to function fully as a competent carer and to model this self-care to other family members.

Ideas to help you relax

The following are some ideas for managing stress and taking care of yourself:

- Make time for yourself and your family.
- Schedule things that interest you, like hobbies, sports or time with friends. Plan these activities and put them on the calendar to make sure they happen.
- Exercising regularly, such as walking or doing yoga, can give you a break, improve your health, release tension, and increase your energy and give you space to focus on yourself.
- Soak in a hot bath.
- Go to a movie.
- Spend time in the garden.
- Read a book.
- Enjoy a massage or facial.

Respite care

Respite care is another term for a 'break'. Carers, like all other parents, need a break from time to time. Respite care is a good opportunity to refocus and spend time with your family. It is important that you speak with your senior child protection worker placement services or caseworker about planning regular breaks.

Emotional support

From time to time, carers and their families might find caring for a foster child difficult and may need to consider personal

or family counselling. As part of the Department's support to carers, referral to the Davidson Trahaire Corpsych (DTC) counselling service is available free of charge to all foster families and their children. Carers can refer themselves to this service by calling DTC direct on free call 1300 360 364.

Your most important supports may be your partner (if you have one), other family members or friends. If you just need someone to listen to you (rather than give advice), you could let him or her know in advance.

When speaking to other people, be mindful of the confidentiality of the child in care. You could say to the other person, "You don't need to know names, I just want to talk about how I feel."

Parenting WA

Parenting WA offers an information, advice, support and referral service to parents and families with children up to 18 years of age. This service welcomes calls from foster and family carers and may be a useful source of information and support for you. Parenting WA offers:

- A parenting line that is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
Telephone: (08) 6279 1200
Country free call: 1800 654 432.
- The Parenting WA library, which is available 9:00am to 5:00pm Monday to Friday.
Telephone: (08) 6279 1223
Country free call: 1800 686 155
- An online resources ordering service, which you can access through www.communities.wa.gov.au.

Further support

Department for Child Protection and Family Support

Telephone: (08) 9222 2555

Country free call: 1800 622 258

Website: www.childprotection.wa.gov.au

Foster Care Association of WA

Telephone: (08) 9384 5577

Country free call: 1800 641 911

Website: www.fcawa.com.au