

01

**POSITIVE APPROACHES
TO CARING**

POSITIVE APPROACHES TO CARING

Caring can be physically and emotionally challenging and change the dynamics of your relationship. We have shared a number of approaches and strategies that may be helpful in your role as a carer. Clicking on the underlined topic will take you straight to that page.

- 03 [Wellness & reablement](#)
- 05 [Supported decision making](#)
- 07 [Maintaining relationships as a carer](#)
- 08 [Verbal communication](#)
- 09 [Non-verbal communication](#)
- 10 [How can you communicate well with the person you are caring for?](#)
- 11 [How can you communicate well with health professionals?](#)
- 12 [Mental Health concerns](#)
- 15 [Understanding behaviour changes](#)
- 17 [Accessing support networks](#)
- 18 [Where to get more support](#)
- 19 [Disclaimer](#)

Disclaimer:

This module is designed to provide entry level content and more complex care/caring needs or specific issues should be addressed by a health professional.



Clicking this home button will bring you back to this page

WELLNESS & REABLEMENT

WHAT

A wellness and reablement approach recognises that people have the capacity to improve and to gain or regain abilities. The focus is on what a person can do and what they want to be able to do. The carer works with them to achieve this.

WHY

This changes the focus from the traditional approach of what a person can't do towards a focus on what they can do and what they want to be able to do. This creates a more purposeful, independent and meaningful life.

You should always work with the person whenever possible to complete a task or achieve their goal.



WHEN



HOW TO APPLY THIS

1. Have a 'do with' rather than 'doing for' approach

2. Work together and set goals to improve the person's social, physical and emotional wellbeing

3. Think ability not disability; think strengths not weaknesses

4. Work with the person to learn new skills which are meaningful to them

5. Find solutions to problems to allow people to do things for themselves

6. Try to motivate and empower the person to continue to do things for themselves

7. Seek advice from a physiotherapist or occupational therapist to identify ways the person you care for can do more for themselves. They may benefit from training, an exercise program or equipment

EXAMPLES OF WELLNESS AND REABLEMENT ACTIVITIES



1. A personalised and targeted exercise plan



2. Expressing yourself through art, music or dance



3. Equipment to support independence such as a hand-held shower or cutlery with large grips



4. Teach person how to grocery shop online or to Skype family and friends to stay connected



Here is an example of a wellness and reablement program where men learn to cook



SUPPORTED DECISION MAKING

WHAT

Supported decision making is helping someone to make their own decisions so they have control over the things that are important to them and maintain some independence in their life.

The person receiving care is the decision maker and decisions are driven by their will and preferences.

WHY

We all need help sometimes to make decisions. We may turn to friends, family or professionals to get the support we need.

WHEN

It is important for you to provide the person you are caring for with as many opportunities as possible to make decisions for themselves.

These decisions may be about day to day activities, healthcare choices, financial choices or lifestyle choices.

HOW TO EFFECTIVELY SUPPORT DECISION MAKING

1. Keep in mind a person's likes, dislikes, goals, experience, communication style and values

2. Provide opportunities for the person to be involved in decisions affecting them

4. Provide information in a way that the person understands. This may be using pictures or objects

3. Try to conduct conversations in a comfortable and familiar environment

5. Assist the person to weigh up the options, including any risks. Recognise the person has a right to take risks

6. Remain neutral, avoid personal bias and try not to influence the decision

8. Plan for future decisions so the person has an opportunity to think and then explain their needs and preferences

7. Assist the person to implement the decision, communicate it to others, and reflect on their decision



EXAMPLES OF SUPPORTED DECISION MAKING



1. Clarifying when a person likes to shower and dress and helping them communicate this decision to others



2. Involving the person in how their money is spent, even if you are the person responsible for their finances



3. Supporting the person to complete an advance care plan so their future health care wishes are known



4. Exploring options available with the person you care for if the person is moving to residential care



[CLICK HERE FOR MORE](#)

Click here for more information and practical tips on being a supporter



MAINTAINING RELATIONSHIPS AS A CARER

WHAT

Caring for someone has the potential to change your relationship with that person. In some cases it will bring people closer. In other cases, it can have a negative effect and can strain the relationship.

WHY

The demands of caring may affect work, recreation and leisure activities. There may be little time for other family members or friends. This can lead to feelings of loneliness, unhappiness and resentment.

WHEN

Relationship breakdowns usually occur when your caring responsibilities are put before everything else. This is usually driven by a desire to do what's best for the person you care for. However, this may eventually impact on your own health and wellbeing.



In this video, people talk about what it means to be a carer

HOW TO MANAGE THE CHANGE IN YOUR RELATIONSHIP

1. Talking about the changes with each-other can avoid misunderstandings

2. Allow time to adjust to the change, especially if your roles have been reversed

4. Give the person you are care for the chance to do things for themselves

3. Set boundaries to maintain independence and allow you both to feel in control

5. Being flexible and open to change can reduce stress

6. See if you can share the caring role with family members

7. Seek help when you need it, such as taking a break, arranging extra services like respite, talking to other carers, seeking professional help like counselling



Refer to **Module 2** for more information on planning ahead.

VERBAL COMMUNICATION

WHAT

Being able to communicate information accurately, clearly, and as intended is an essential life skill. Communicating as a carer can be complicated, especially when supporting a person with difficulty understanding or processing information.

WHY

Learning to communicate with the person you are caring for is an important part of maintaining a healthy relationship. It will also mean that your needs and their needs are met.

WHEN

Strong communication is particularly important when a person is stressed, tired or anxious. It is also important when addressing a change in need, circumstance or activity.



HOW TO COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY

A banner for a training module. The background is dark blue with abstract teal and green shapes on the right. The text is white. At the top right, a red button says 'CLICK HERE FOR MORE'. The main title is 'Effective communication techniques'. Below it, a clock icon is next to the text 'How long will it take? 15-30 Minutes'. At the bottom right, a white button says 'Begin'.

Carer Gateway has a training module gives practical tips on how to improve your communication skills in order to be more confident and effective as a carer.



NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

WHAT

When we communicate, we don't just use our words. A big part of the way we communicate occurs through non-verbal cues. This includes things like body language, facial expression and gesturing.

WHY

Only 7% of a message is communicated through words. 55% is through facial expressions and 38% is through our tone of voice. When verbal and non-verbal communication are similar, it can help to ensure correct understanding.

WHEN

You should always be aware of what non-verbal messages you are sending. Try to be sensitive to things like eye contact, body position and movement, gestures and pauses.

When communicating with others, only implement strategies which the other person is comfortable with. This may be influenced by the person's age, gender, culture and religion.



HOW TO COMMUNICATE WITHOUT WORDS



Eye Contact - Looking someone in the eye can help to convey genuine interest, sincerity and confidence. Eye contact can help you to see if the person understands what you are saying.



Body Position - Posture can convey things like confidence or vulnerability, as well as create a sense of trust in the message that you are trying to convey. It can also show you are interested in what someone is saying.



Gestures and Touch - Try to use only the body movements and gestures necessary to make your point. Lots of body movements can be distracting to the listener. Touch can convey a sense of caring.

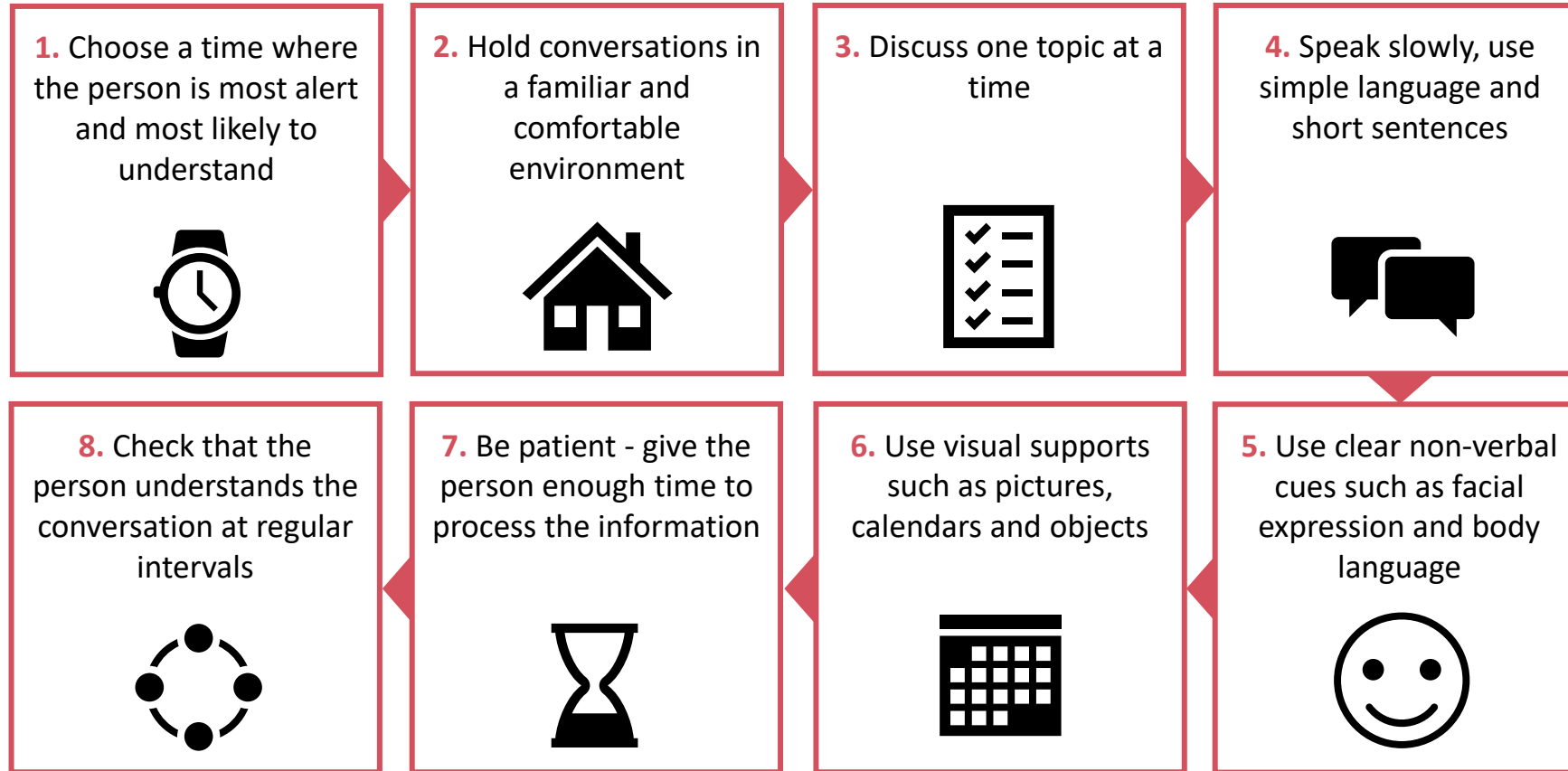


Facial Expression - Your expressions can say more than the words you speak. Try to smile and show interest when you communicate with others.



TIP: This is a general guide. Some people may be uncomfortable with direct eye contact or touch.

HOW CAN YOU COMMUNICATE WELL WITH THE PERSON YOU ARE CARING FOR?



HOW CAN YOU COMMUNICATE WELL WITH HEALTH PROFESSIONALS?



Refer to **Module 2** for information on complaints and advocacy

WHEN TO BE CONCERNED ABOUT SOMEONE'S MENTAL HEALTH

WHAT

Mental health is about being cognitively, emotionally and socially healthy; not just the absence of a mental health condition.

Mental ill health can significantly affect how a person feels, thinks, behaves, and interacts with other people.

WHY

Poor mental health can effect a person as much as a physical illness. When a person experiences a decline in their mental health, it can make them feel very sad or worried about life. It can also reduce their ability to cope with stress.

WHEN

Changes in mental health are very common. In fact, 1 in 4 people will have a mental health condition at some point in their lives.

You should seek support for the person you support if you notice changes in their mood, sleeping patterns, conversations or actions.

If you are concerned, try to seek help as soon as possible. Seeking help early can speed up the recovery process.

If you or the person you care for has suicidal thoughts phone triple zero (000) immediately.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS TO WATCH FOR?



Feeling unhappy or depressed



Feeling anxious or worried



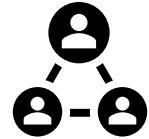
Angry or emotional outbursts



Alcohol or substance abuse



Changes in appetite or weight



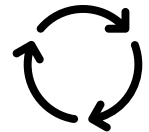
Withdrawing from friends and/or family



Feeling worthless or guilty



Increased tiredness or sleep problems



Changes in behaviour



Lifeline **13 11 14** | Beyond Blue **1300 224 636** | Kids Helpline **1800 55 1800**

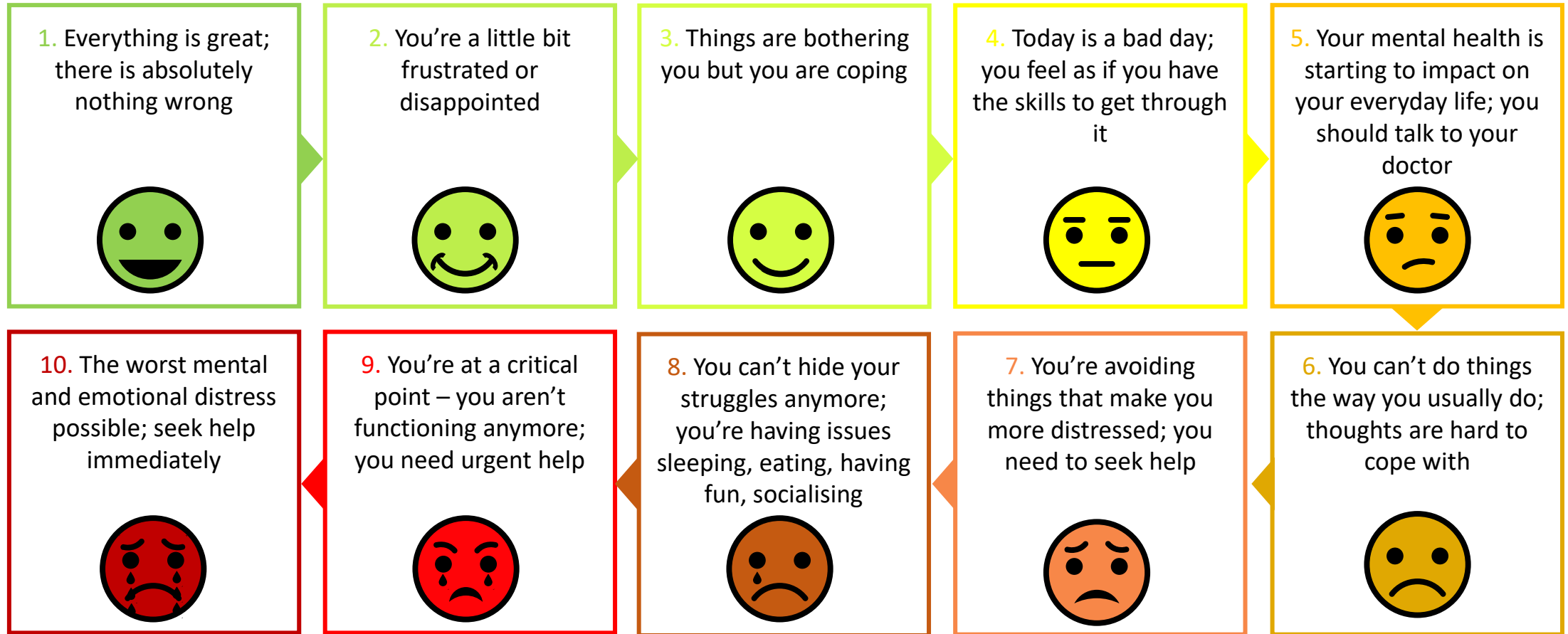
STRATEGIES FOR ACHIEVING BETTER MENTAL HEALTH

Where possible, try to implement these strategies:



A WAY TO CHECK IF THE PERSON YOU CARE FOR SHOULD SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP

Using a mental health scale can help someone to tell you how they are feeling without using words.



TIP: Beyond Blue has a checklist you can complete to measure how anxious or depressed someone has been in the past 4 weeks. Located [here](#).



UNDERSTANDING BEHAVIOUR CHANGES

WHAT

Behaviour changes are very common for people living with cognition issues or dementia. This can be distressing for families and carers. The changes may cause stress, worry, risk or actual harm.

WHY

There are many reasons why the person's behaviour may be changing, such as changes taking place in the brain, health issues, medication changes or environmental changes. There may be an unmet need or want that the person is unable to communicate.

Behaviours will vary from person to person and may change over time. It is important to try and understand the cause, trigger or patterns leading up to the behavior.

WHERE

Always discuss any changes with the person's doctor, as there may be a physical illness or discomfort that can be addressed.

If you feel yourself, the person you support or others are at risk due to a change in behavior, speak to the doctor. Read the tips and access the supports shown on [page 16 -17](#).

WHEN



BEHAVIOUR CHANGES TO BE CONCERNED ABOUT

1. Apathy or boredom



2. Extreme anxiety or agitation



3. Calling out nonstop or repeating questions



4. Disinhibition like undressing in public



5. Pacing relentlessly



6. Physical aggression



7. Getting confused in the afternoons (sun downing)



8. Wandering away from home



9. Depression or delusions



WAYS TO SUPPORT A PERSON WITH BEHAVIOUR CHANGES

There are many things we can do to reduce the frequency and impact of behaviour changes. These range from checking the person you support is comfortable, managing your environment, having structure and routine and communicating clearly.

1. Address physical factors

Rule out things like hunger, thirst, fatigue, pain, medication side-effects, infection or constipation



2. Consider the environment

Have a look around. Is the room too hot or cold, is it really noisy or crowded? Do the windows create lots of glare or shadows?



3. Keep to a routine

Involve the person in the decision making process. Have a structure around things like showering, meals and bedtime.



4. When talking

Always stay calm and speak slowly. Use simple language and short sentences. Use orientating names like “your son jack”. See more tips on [page 8 - 11](#)



8. Seek professional help

You can talk to your doctor, ask for a review from a geriatrician or call a helpline. See help line numbers below.



7. Stay connected

Support the person to stay in touch with family and friends. Find meaningful activities. Continue to go to the park, beach or café. Look at photo albums and share stories



6. Connect through music

Choose familiar songs with happy memories, match music to the time of day and remember dancing is good exercise.



5. When listening

Listen carefully and try not to interrupt. Allow time for the person to process what has been said. Try to be patient even if you have answered the person’s questions already.



National Dementia Helpline **1800 100 500** | Dementia Behaviour Management Advisory Service **1800 699 799**

ACCESSING SUPPORT NETWORKS

Caring can be both challenging and rewarding. Having people in your life that understand you and your role as a carer can be comforting during good times and bad times. You may have the support of family and friends. You may also wish to connect with other carers with similar experiences. See a few options below.

Carers NSW



PEER CONNECTION
BENEFITS

CLICK HERE FOR MORE



ONLINE PEER CONNECTION

CLICK HERE FOR MORE

Carers NSW is the peak non-government organisation for carers in NSW and a member of the National Network of Carers Association.

We have a number of resources to help carers meet and connect with others, including carer support groups, online peer connection, and weekly carer hangouts.

Call **(02) 9280 4744** weekdays from 9am to 5pm to learn more or click [here](#) to visit website.

Gather My Crew



CLICK HERE FOR MORE

People often want to help, but they do not know how.

Gather My Crew has a free roster tool to coordinate offers of help from family, friends and neighbours. Tasks may include meals, transport and home help.

Click [here](#) to visit website.



WHERE TO GET MORE SUPPORT

Everyone can benefit from some support from time to time. This could be in the form of building your knowledge and skill base, connecting with other carers, taking a break (respite), arranging extra care and support or seeking specialist help. Connecting with the following services may be helpful.

The role of My Aged Care

My Aged Care offers a range of tailored services and supports to help people maintain their quality of life as they get older.



A graphic card for My Aged Care. It features a clock icon with the text '2 minutes' next to it. Below the clock, it says 'Visit www.myagedcare.gov.au' and 'Or call 1800 200 422'. At the bottom, there are logos for the Australian Government and My Aged Care, and a red button that says 'CLICK HERE FOR MORE'.

Call **1800 200 422** weekdays from 8am to 8pm, Saturdays from 10am till 2pm.

Click [here](#) to visit website.

The role of Carer Gateway

The Carer Gateway offers a range of tailored services and supports to help carers manage challenges, reduce stress and plan ahead for the future.



A graphic card for Carer Gateway. It features a clock icon with the text '1 minute' next to it. The background shows an illustration of a woman with a headset talking on a laptop. At the bottom, there is a red button that says 'CLICK HERE FOR MORE'.

Call **1800 422 737** weekdays 8am to 5pm to discuss your needs.
Call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for emergency respite.

Visit [here](#) for online supports.

The role of Dementia Australia

Dementia Australia provides support, education and information for people living with dementia, their families and carers.



A graphic card for Dementia Australia. It features a clock icon with the text '30 Seconds' next to it. The background is black with the text 'YOU ARE NOT ALONE' in green and 'KNOWLEDGE CAN BE KEY' in white. At the bottom, there is a red button that says 'CLICK HERE FOR MORE'.

Call the National Dementia Helpline with concerns for yourself or the person you care for on **1800 100 500** weekdays from 9am to 5pm.

Click [here](#) to visit website.



Refer to **Module 2** for more information on My Aged Care and the Carer Gateway

DISCLAIMER

All of the content in this resource is for informational purposes only. It is not a substitute for advice provided by a doctor or other qualified health professional. The information in this resource is true and correct at time of publishing.

Carers NSW thanks the many carers involved in the development of this information for sharing their experiences and suggestions for the benefit of other carers.

The development of these resources was supported with funding from the Australian Government.

For information contact:

Carers NSW

Level 10, 213 Miller Street

North Sydney NSW 2060

Telephone: 02 9280 4744

Facsimile: 02 9280 4755

Email: contact@carersnsw.org.au

Website: www.carersnsw.org.au

© Carers NSW 2020

