

Caring for someone towards the end of life



Young carers – let's talk about feelings!

Feelings – not such an easy topic to talk about, but so important. We spoke with young carers, aged 25 and under, about their experience as a carer of someone who is approaching the end of life. Everyone is unique, but there are common feelings that young carers experience. This information shares some of these emotions and reactions as well as suggestions around how to deal with your feelings.

Young carers share their journey

Many emotions...

- Sometimes it's frustrating as I can't put my own needs first. And then I feel guilty for thinking this way
- Exhausted a lot of the time just caring for them
- I felt helpless and I felt there was nothing I could do
- I felt cut off from friendship groups as I have no time to socialise. I felt isolated as a result.
- When I do go out I worry about how things are at home
- I worry about how mum and dad will cope at the end.

And reactions...

- When people ask how I am, I automatically say, 'I'm fine'
- I had to grow up fast. It took a lot of adapting
- Most of the time I didn't think about me. I just did what I needed to do for her
- I felt I had to be strong and not show emotions. I didn't talk about it to anyone
- I felt other people sheltered us like we might break because we were young. But we needed to know what was going on.

Other impacts...

- It's different for young people as we are in the early stages of our life. It affects study, work, social life and finances
- I had to learn to cook, pay bills, and clean the house. I had to grow up way too soon
- I went from having no real responsibility to being responsible for someone else's health and life. That was scary
- My friends were partying and I couldn't very easily.

Sharing your feelings

All these emotions and reactions are natural, but it's important that you have a person or a group to share these with.



- I didn't share what was going on with friends at first but I learnt that I should talk to them
- I avoided going out to meet people as they don't understand but I had to learn to open up to people
- Don't internalise and hold everything close to your chest. You can't do it on your own.

Learning more

It helps to have a clear understanding of what is going on, whether this is through having someone you trust and can talk to about your feelings or finding out more information. Young carers suggest:

- Have an advocate to help you with understanding things. This could be a friend, family, or teacher
- Learn about the health system and how it works
- Search out supports and do a bit of research. It can be useful and helps with processing what's going on
- Find information about what to expect in the last weeks of life. As a first-time carer you don't know what to expect. Talk to your palliative care team or doctor.



Further information and support

- **Carer Gateway** – www.carergateway.gov.au or 1800 422 737
- **Carers NSW** – www.carersnsw.org.au
- **Kids Helpline** – www.kidshelpline.com.au or 1800 551 800
- Talk to your **doctor**

