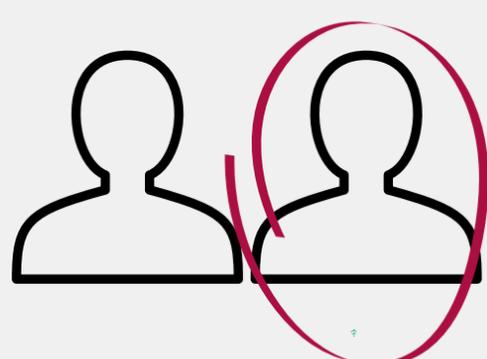
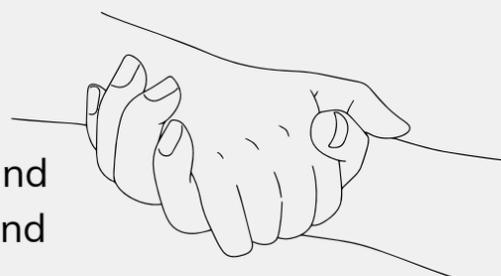


# Self-care for SWAN carers

## Looking after you

Being a SWAN parent/carer can be rewarding and challenging. You might feel pride, love, anxiety and fatigue all at the same time. You are not alone.

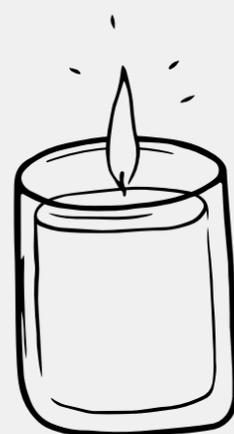


50% felt that caring had a negative impact on their health

Australian carers are 2.5 times more likely to have low wellbeing, and 50% feel that caring has a negative impact on their health ([Carer Wellbeing Survey](#))

Care burnout is a real thing. Some signs of burnout are physical and mental exhaustion, irritability and feeling run-down.

When your cup is half full, please take time to care for yourself. Here are some self-care tips:



### 1 Look after your physical health



#### Eat Wholesome Food



This can slip, understandably.

[Nutrition Connection](#) has prepared 20 free and easy meal ideas for carers. Foods with pre and probiotics can help boost your immune system as well as vitamins and minerals. See this [article](#) for more info on immune boosting foods.

#### Exercise Regularly

- Walks, runs and/or gym work
- Yoga and pilates (Youtube for ultimate flexibility and varied levels)
- Team sports (physical and social benefits too!)
- Parks and free outdoor gyms - with the help of another carer, exercise while the kids play
- Incorporate rest into your exercise routine



Don't love exercise? Music or a podcast might help. SWAN recommends [Too Peas in a Podcast](#) for heart-warming and relatable content.

## Sleep 7-9 hours per night



This can be difficult for SWAN parents, especially with children needing care through the night.

Loosely track your sleep or use sleep-tracking apps to understand how sleep may be affecting you or how much to catch up on.

## 2 Look after your mental health



### See a Therapist

There are many types of free and paid services. Find what works best for you. Carer Gateway provides free [carer counselling](#). See their [strategies for better health](#).



For crisis support, call Lifeline on 13 11 14.

### Mindfulness and Meditation



If you're new to this, apps such as Headspace and Calm can get you started.

Mindfulness has many [physical and mental benefits](#) and can help you cope with stress.

### Find your own balance

SWAN families are typically very busy with school, therapy, medical appointments and much more.

As a carer, juggling these commitments with work and trying to live your life can be stressful. One way to achieve balance could be to negotiate flexible working arrangements.



## 3 Set aside me-time for hobbies or relaxation

As a carer, it's hard to set time aside for yourself. Consider scheduling this time in, like you would a medical appointment for your child.

So meditation might not be your thing. What do you find relaxing?



- Reading
- Music
- [Art Therapy](#).
- Time in nature: hikes, surfing, sitting in a scenic spot, time at the beach
- Baking
- Watching your favourite TV show
- Board games or cards

## 4 Connect with Others

### Peer Support

Please see our [events calendar](#) for peer support events. You can also find local groups through [MyTime](#). You can also schedule a call with the SWAN Peer Support and Information Officer for compassionate and practical support and via our [website](#).

Never underestimate the value of peer support!



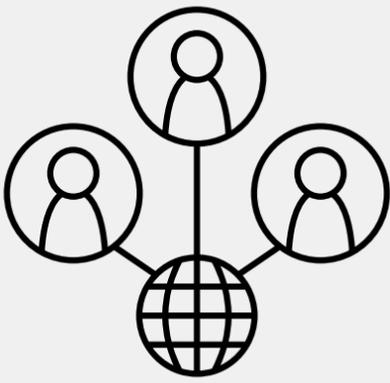
### Socialise with Friends and Family

Casual coffees, fun activities, nights out...whatever this looks like for you!

Planning backup supports for your child ahead of time can help you get out the door. It never hurts to have a plan B.

### Connect with Community

Connecting with the community can make a huge difference in making you feel supported as an individual and family. This may include developing positive relationships with teachers and parents at your child's school so that you feel comfortable asking for help in times of need.



### Virtual catch ups

An alternative for vulnerable families who are still limiting contact to stay protected.

Please see our recorded session with psychologist Dr Sue Hawkins: [Coping in the pandemic... what helps](#).

## 5 Be adaptable and kind to yourself

Self-care is about addressing your personal needs rather than subscribing to a general set of standards.

If you have had a physically taxing day, you may wish to prioritise rest over exercise, for example.

Take the [self-compassion test](#) to understand how self-compassionate you are whether you could be kinder to yourself.



## A special note for our bereaved parents

Libby Roden from Very Special Kids has prepared a [grieving self-care](#) resource especially for you.

These tips cover mental, emotional and physical care to improve your well-being and open up opportunities for healing.

