



Carer Support Groups

These are groups for people who are looking after someone with a disability or illness. One of the most important parts of being a carer is looking after yourself. Carer support groups are one way of doing that.

Did you know that there are Support Groups for people like you?

A carer support group is a group of people who are carers just like you. The group comes together on a regular basis to yarn about what it's like caring for a family member or close friend. The idea is to have some time out from caring, share ideas about looking after someone, get emotional support and information about what is available to help you.

As a carer, you have different needs from the person you are helping. Yarning with other carers at a support group often helps you to see that your needs are just as important as those of the person you are helping to support.

What about our privacy?

Anything personal that comes up at the support groups is private (or confidential.) This means that what you yarn about cannot be taken outside the group.

What you can get out of a carer support group?

Being with people that know what you're going through.

Carer support groups are full of people, like yourself, who know what it's like to be a carer. By yarning to other carers, you will find that you're not the only one feeling the way you do. It can be a relief to find that other people are feeling the same way!

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Emotional support.

Carers often go through mixed emotions like sadness, frustration, anger, depression, guilt, exhaustion and so on. Sometimes we feel that we should not show such emotions, because Aboriginal Carers often feel they should soldier on. Mixed emotions are a normal part of everyday caring. Carer Support groups allow you to get these feelings out of your system without feeling guilty or weak.

It's important not to bottle things up inside you.

At a Carer Support group, you'll find it's okay to feel the way you do.

Overcoming Loneliness

Sometimes carers get stuck at home and can't get out. This can cause you to feel lonely and perhaps even depressed. Getting out to a support group can help you see you're not alone and this usually helps you to feel better as well!

Getting information

Support groups keep you up to date with what's going on for carers as well as letting you know about benefits and what is out there for you. Carers often swap ideas and advice on how to deal with situations. This can be useful, because it comes from someone who's been there, done that. Some of the people may know about services that can help you. As well, Carers NSW usually tells support groups about important events and get togethers that are coming up such as Carers Week events.

Making new friends

Many people make new friends and stay in contact between the support group get togethers.

Are there support groups for different types of carers“?

There are 'open' carer support groups, which have carers who look after people who have all sorts of disabilities. However, there are lots of groups for carers of:

- *People with dementia*
- *People with a mental illness such as schizophrenia*
- *Children with disabilities*
- *People with cancer*
- *People with brain injuries*
- *People who have had a stroke*

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There are support groups for people caring for people with other disabilities as well. It could take you a while to feel that you belong to the group but do not feel shame or embarrassed because you are not the only one. There are others "in the same boat" and the group is there to help you. If, after a while you feel the group is not for you, you can always try another group because you may find you get on better with the people in the other group.

When do groups meet?

Most groups meet once a month for a couple of hours. Some groups meet fortnightly or weekly. The meeting place is usually the same. There are support groups in the bush and in most large towns. To find out where your nearest support group is ring **the Commonwealth Carer Resource Centre on 1800 242 636***

All the groups are free, although some ask for a small donation for morning or afternoon tea.

What if I need help to arrange for the person I care for to be looked after?

Contact the person in charge of the group. They can arrange for someone to care for the person you look after while you go to the group. The group may even be held at a day centre where care for the person you look after is provided.

If the person in charge of the group cannot arrange for someone to look after the person you care for, then ask your local Aboriginal Worker to help you or ring the Commonwealth Carer Respite Centre on 1800 059 059*.

You can also ring the **Commonwealth Carer Resource Centre** on **1800 242 636*** for help.

What if I need transport to get to the support group?

Ask the person in charge of the group if they can arrange transport. Otherwise, speak to your local Aboriginal Worker or you can ring the **Commonwealth Carer Resource Centre** on **1800 242 636*** to find out about transport options.

**1800 242 636 Free call except from mobile phones. Mobile calls at mobile rates.*