

Looking after yourself as a carer

Your role as a carer is incredibly important to the children you will care for.

As with everything important there may be times when you face challenges you have not previously experienced. There may be behaviours in a child that you have not had to manage before. Please ask for help or guidance from those around you with experience.

Children in out-of-home care have often lived through a range of traumatic childhood experiences, including abuse and neglect. This can influence how they behave, feel and how they see the world. They can sometimes behave in ways that you may find challenging and demanding. They can behave in ways that you and they cannot understand.

As a carer, you are providing these children with a safe and supportive home when they ~~are~~ ^{do not} live with their family. You may be caring for a child for one night or for many years, depending on the circumstances.

Health and wellbeing

- Look after your body . get enough sleep and do some exercise.
- Maintain a healthy diet . and treat yourself from time to time.
- Maintain social contact with friends and relatives.
- Do hobbies or activities that allow you to switch off where possible.
- Do fun activities together with the child and your family.
- Laugh! Remember to keep your sense of humour.
- Take a holistic approach . do something for your mind, body, spirit and culture.
- Connect and be involved in the community . attend community events and festivals.

Emotional health

- Do something that lifts your spirit and spend time with others who make you feel good.
- Have regular contact with friends and relatives.
- Be a scientist about your own behaviours and self-talk. If either becomes negative about you or the child seek help.
- Talk with your friends, family, or partner. When speaking to other people, be mindful of the confidentiality of the child in care.

Support and developmental resources

- Reach out and chat with your caseworker or the senior child protection worker - placement services and ask how they can support you. You may wish to discuss a particular issue or seek advice on how to deal with certain behaviours. Your district may also conduct regular get togethers for carers.
- Ask friends or relatives to prepare meals or arrange for home delivery meals from time to time.
- Start a diary that outlines your expectations in this role and discuss this with the case manager. Periodically check in on those expectations for yourself and with the case manager.
- Maintain the diary focusing on your own behaviours and thoughts about the situation over time and this is a good way of monitoring your changes.
- Arrange for someone to do household chores or set up a roster. If the child is old enough, get them to be part of the roster to help out with the chores. This will help in building life skills and being part of your family.

