

Caring for the Carer: Self-Care and Burnout Prevention

For Carers and Whānau

Caring for someone you love is a powerful act of service. But when you're always giving, it's easy to forget that you need care too. Whether you're a full-time carer, a friend who checks in, or a whānau member holding it all together behind the scenes, you matter.

This guide is here to gently remind you that looking after yourself is not selfish, it's essential.

Understanding Burnout

Burnout can sneak up slowly. It's more than just being tired - it's when physical, mental, and emotional exhaustion start to take over.

Signs to watch for:

- Feeling overwhelmed or numb
- Short temper or tears over small things
- Constant fatigue, even after resting
- Withdrawing from others
- Feeling like you're failing, even when you're doing your best

Daily Self-Care Tips

Start with small, doable things:

- Breathe deeply. Take 3 long, slow breaths when you feel tension rising.
- Drink water. Often we forget the basics.
- Move your body. Stretch, walk, or simply step outside for fresh air.
- Eat when you can. Keep easy, nourishing snacks on hand.
- Rest when possible. Even a 10-minute break can reset your energy.

Emotional Care Matters Too

- Talk to someone. A trusted friend, a counsellor, or support group can help you carry the weight.
- Write it down. Journaling can help release unspoken thoughts.
- Say "no" when needed. You don't have to do everything. Boundaries protect your energy.

Caring Boundaries You're Allowed to Set

- "I can help with this, but not that."
- "I need a quiet night tonight."
- "Can you take over for an hour?"
- "I don't have the answer right now, but I'll find support."

Saying no doesn't mean you care less — it means you care sustainably.

Where to Find Support

- Talk to your GP about carer support options
- Contact Carers NZ: www.carers.net.nz
- Reach out to us at NCF, we can link you with free counselling, peer support, and resources

Final Thought

You are doing an incredible job — even when it doesn't feel like it. You are allowed to rest. You are allowed to feel. And you are not alone. At Neuro Connection Foundation, we care for you too.