

5 Ways to Deal With Carer Guilt

There are currently an estimated 100s of thousands of people caring for someone living with dementia in the UK, and 40% of those carers suffer from clinical depression or anxiety. Though this statistic may seem high, it is not surprising, as caring for a loved one with dementia is an exhausting job, both emotionally and physically. It is therefore understandable that you may suffer from low mood, anxiety, as well as bouts of guilt, regardless of the amazing job you are doing.



Forgive Yourself

Try not to beat yourself up if you get angry, impatient or snap at your loved one. It is only natural due to the pressure you're probably feeling looking after a person living with dementia. If possible, as soon as you feel your impatience begin to rise, step away and start taking some controlled, deep breaths. You will gradually feel your heart rate slowing back down, and will start to feel calm again. Remember, your loved one isn't trying to upset you on purpose, just as you are not losing your patience on purpose, everyone experiences moments of irritation, and it is just about finding a way to cope when you do feel the frustration coming to the surface.



Make Each Interaction Matter

You may feel guilt about the amount or quality of time you spend with your loved one, perhaps feeling too exhausted to face taking them out for the day, every single visit. But do try to make each visit matter. Now, this doesn't mean killing yourself trying to organise a perfect day, it can be as simple as doing a jigsaw puzzle together, or simply helping with some chores around the house.

Talk About It

Remember that communication is key, and a problem shared really is a problem halved. Talk to your close friends or family, or speak to a professional about any guilt or depression you are feeling, and for guidance in how to cope with these emotions. You may also find that joining a carer's support group is beneficial, as everyone understands exactly what you are experiencing, and can give you advice on how they have dealt with similar situations.

Take Time for Yourself

Everyone needs time to re-charge and re-focus, so ensure you take some time out for yourself and do not feel guilty. Whether it's just an afternoon spent at home, or a few days away in a hotel, it will help you feel balanced and relaxed. Put in place the care your loved one will need, whether it's another family member helping out or a placing your loved one in short-term residential care. You can then relax and remove any feelings of guilt, safe in the knowledge that your loved one is being well looked after, and you'll be seeing them soon, but with renewed vigour and energy.



Ask For Help

Too often carers suffer in silence, feeling too guilty to admit they are struggling and need help. There is nothing wrong with asking for an extra pair hands, whether on a regular basis, or more ad hoc. There are services available which can assist you in finding the right type of help, or if you have other close family members, maybe discuss a care schedule, so you are all helping out and the care doesn't just fall on one person