

onguard

A regular newsletter for guardians in NSW

October 2010

ISSN NUMBER 1836-5485

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Looking After Yourself

Welcome to the Spring edition of *Onguard*, where we focus on how you can deal with the demands and pressure of being a guardian. It is really important to look after yourself, in order to ensure the well-being of the person under guardianship. One of the best ways to look after yourself as a guardian is to get support and talk things over.

Staff here at the *Private Guardian Support Unit* can offer advice, information and put you in contact with a range of services. We can attend meetings and assist with drafting plans and letters. As always, we welcome your feedback and ideas for future editions of *Onguard*.

Stress Less

Stress in a general sense can be defined as "pressure". Problematic stress can be defined as a condition or feeling experienced when a person feels that demands are greater than the personal and social resources they have to manage these. Stress is something that is part of normal life and is experienced by everyone from time-to-time. However, some people suffer from stress which is so frequent or so severe that it can seriously impact on their quality of life.

What can cause stress?

Stress can come from a huge range of sources (stressors), such as:

- Relationships with others
- Work-related issues
- Study demands
- Dealing with illness or disability
- Life changes, such as marriage, retirement, divorce
- Day-to-day activities and tasks
- Positive events, such as organising holidays or parties
- Juggling many roles or tasks at the same time

What stresses do guardians have?

- Crises - needing to make urgent decisions, when the person is at risk and there are no immediate solutions
- Pressures - meeting unreasonable deadlines, dealing with change
- Frustration - poor communication by services, lack of understanding of your role as guardian
- Threats - discrimination, harassment towards you or the person under guardianship

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10 Principles of Coping

1. Realise you are not alone.
2. Learn about the situation and system.
3. Self-blame can destroy coping.
4. Seek effective professional helpers.
5. Contact a self help program.
6. Understand the origins of pressure and stress in your life.
7. Pay great attention to the needs of other members of your family.
8. Maintain and establish friendships and hobbies outside the home.
9. Unconditional self-sacrifice is fatal to effective caring and coping.
10. Take very great care of yourself.

Adapted from Ken Alexander's work on 14 principles of coping with mental illness.



Help for Older Parents

If you are a parent aged 60 years or over, and caring for a son or daughter with a disability or long-term illness, then Carers NSW can offer assistance and support through their *Planning for the Future Project*. If you're an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander parent carer aged 45 or over then they can help you too.

The *Planning for the Future Project* delivers a flexible, family-centred case management service which aims to prevent or alleviate the stress that can build up in families because of caring responsibilities.

This project can help with referral to the right services as well as information relevant to your situation. They can also talk with you and your family to develop a case plan tailored to your family situation.

Please call the *Planning for the Future Project* coordinator on 1800 242 636.

National Carers Week is from 17 -23 October 2010. "National Carers Day Out" will be held on Tue 19 October.
www.carersweek.com.au

National Carers Counselling Program

Carers NSW have a short-term counselling service which focuses on helping you build your resilience in your caring role. It is done in a safe and non judgemental environment so you can share your story and feel heard and understood. The counsellor is sensitive to the issues faced by carers.

Counselling can assist you with:

- Managing your stress, anxiety or depression
- Learning new skills to cope with your life as a carer
- Practical problem solving techniques
- Dealing with grief and loss you may be experiencing
- Emotional support
- Enhancing your health and wellbeing

There are two ways of experiencing confidential counselling:

1. Face to face at a time and location to suit you, in both rural and metropolitan locations. Some people prefer to talk things over in person with their counsellor.
2. Telephone at a time to suit you. This is a good option for people who live in remote areas or who prefer to discuss their situation by phone.

To access this counselling service call Carers NSW on 1800 242 636 and speak to a carer support officer. Alternatively a referral can be made by your GP, case manager, support worker or friend.

This program is a fee for service program. Fees can be reduced or waived in accordance with your capacity to pay. No one will be refused access because of an inability to pay. (Source: Carers NSW)

The Private Guardian Support Unit (PGSU) is a free and confidential information and support service for private guardians in NSW. PGSU is a branch of the Public Guardian and is part of the Department of Justice and Attorney General. The PGSU publishes *Onguard* and *Now You're the Guardian*.

This document has been prepared by the PGSU for only general information purposes.

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This information can be provided in alternative formats such as braille, audiotape, large print or computer disk. Please contact the PGSU for assistance.

