



# STRESS CAUSED BY CARER RESPONSIBILITIES

## Access Assistance

 **0800 652 1618**

 **support@electricalcharity.org**

Available 7 days a week offering free and independent assistance for virtually any problem or issue you may encounter. Our trained advisors assist everyone with respect and empathy.



# STRESS CAUSED BY CARER RESPONSIBILITIES



**Stress and depression can affect anyone, but the pressure and expectations of looking after another person can make carers particularly vulnerable. Stress is part of everyday life and, for many carers, stress can be a major factor affecting their health. Stress is caused by the many demands made on our time and energy and the expectations we have of ourselves.**

Not all stress is negative - stress can alert you to potential dangers and can also spur you on to achieve a goal or complete a task. However, sometimes the balance tips too far and the pressure becomes so intense or so persistent that you may feel unable to cope. Stress can make it hard to cope with the demands of caring. You can become increasingly exhausted, tense and irritable, putting a strain on relationships. This can make you feel you are losing control over your life and that there is no way of regaining this control.

## Here is an example:

Joanne had worked in the energy sector all her life, designing power stations. At 59 she was forced to take early retirement to look after her husband who suffers with dementia. John's dementia progressed rapidly and he is often confused and angry. Joanne is unable to leave John alone but often has feelings of guilt, sadness, confusion or anger. She doesn't share this with anyone but often cries herself to sleep feeling so overwhelmed by the situation.

- > **Do you or someone you know feel overwhelmed the pressures of your/their carers role?**
- > **How do you handle the pressure? (Do you talk with friends and family, keep to yourself, or discuss it with your doctor?)**

## Handling carer's stress :

If you are feeling tearful, angry or have other symptoms of stress, there are a number of steps you can take to help bring down your stress levels. These include:

**Go out of the room** - or right outside if you can - for at least five minutes. Take a deep breath and hold it for a count of three, then breathe out. Repeat again, until you feel more relaxed, but not so often that you feel dizzy.

**Relax your muscles.** Tense muscles are a physical sign that you are stressed. Training in relaxation techniques is often easily available. Your local healthy living centre or local library may have information about this as well as books or tapes about relaxation.

**Don't drink or smoke too much.** Alcohol and cigarettes have harmful effects on your body, and put you more at risk of the physical effects of stress.

Caffeine can have similar effects on your body as stress, so **watch your coffee intake.**

**Get active.** Physical exercise is a simple way to relieve tension. Even a walk to the shops can help reduce your stress levels.

**Try to pace yourself and tackle one thing at a time.** Be realistic about what you expect of yourself. Learn to say 'no' to other people, some of the time at least.

## EIC support services

**Telephone counselling and support**

**Financial assistance to support disability access grants**

**Respite breaks**

**Free confidential helpline available 24/7**