

Tips for carers

The current circumstances relating to COVID-19 and self-isolation can be a particularly difficult time for people who have the added responsibility of caring for a loved one. Changes in routine, reductions in support, and uncertainty about the future can leave people feeling vulnerable and overwhelmed.

If you are a carer it is particularly important to look after yourself; you can't look after your loved one if you're not well.

Looking after yourself includes your physical and emotional needs, and below are some tips, strategies, and useful numbers or contacts to help you to do that.



Practical Help

It can be difficult to ask for help, but during these times it is important that we rely on each other. You do such a valuable job caring for your loved one, and there are people and services who want to help care for you.

Community Transport provided by Royal Voluntary Service (Gwynedd)

The RVS are offering to collect shopping and prescriptions for individuals, and take people to hospital appointments.

They also offer 'Safe and Well' phone checks once or twice a week for people who may be lonely or isolated.

They also provide technical support for people struggling with IT issues

Phone: 01248 661915 Email:

ynysmongwyneddhub@royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk

Carers Trust are keen to support in any way they can including collecting shopping, or checking in via telephone call **01492 542212**

Creating a Contingency Plan

It is a good idea to have a written plan of what would need to happen to keep your loved one safe if you were to become unwell, or unable to care for them.

Carers UK have useful information on their website at www.carersuk.org and search for 'Planning for Emergencies'.

In your contingency plan include the following information:

- Details of the name, address and any other contact details of the person you look after
- Who you and the person you look after would like to be contacted in an emergency – this might include friends, family or professionals
- Details of any medication the person you look after is taking
- Details of any ongoing treatment they need.

Emotional Support

Helplines for carers

National careline: Freephone 0800 0699 784

Carers UK: Freephone 0800 808 7777 Open Monday & Tuesday 10-4

Carers Direct: 0300 123 1053 Open Monday-Friday 9-8, Saturday-Sunday 11-4

Other Helplines

Citizens Advice Bureau:

General advice Monday to Friday 9.30am to 4.30 pm call: **0300 330 11921**

If you are feeling anxious or stressed you can call their ICAN team for a chat

Monday and Thursday 9.30am-2pm on **07496571156** and **Tuesday and**

Wednesdays 9.30am-2pm on **07496571241**

Chat to an online advisor at: **www.citizensadvice.org.uk/contact-us**

Mental Health Helplines

Samaritans Free and confidential 24/7 telephone service offering the opportunity to talk about how you're feeling and explore support options.

Phone 116 123

CALL Mental health information and advice specifically for people in Wales.

Community advice and listening line 24/7. **Phone 0800 132 737**

Mind Info Line Free confidential advice on range of topics including mental health and emotional wellbeing. Monday to Friday 9am-6pm. **Phone 0300**

123 3393

Phone Befriending/ Check-In Services

Age Cymru are offering a free 'check-in-and-chat' telephone service for over 70s. You can register for a regular phone call by calling **08000 223 444** or emailing enquiries@agecymru.org.uk

Silverline offer telephone and letter befriending schemes. Call **0800 470 8090** to find out more or register

Age UK offer a telephone befriending service. Sign up online at www.ageuk.org and search 'befriending services'

Carers Trust are offering regular 'keep in touch' telephone calls, to sign up call **01492 542212**

Carers Outreach are offering regular 'keep in touch' telephone calls, to sign up call **01248 370797** or email: help@carersoutreach.org.uk

Alzheimer's Society for people affected by Dementia

Whilst all face to face groups and support have been cancelled, the Alzheimer's Society offers a lot of support and information online on their website www.alzheimers.org.uk

On their website you can access an online community where people affected by dementia can receive valuable support from people in similar situations, just search **Dementia Talking Point** on their website

They also run a national helpline **0300 22 11 22** that operates:

Monday to Wednesday 9am-8pm

Thursday and Friday 9am-5pm

Saturday and Sunday 10am-4pm

Calls are charged at normal network rate

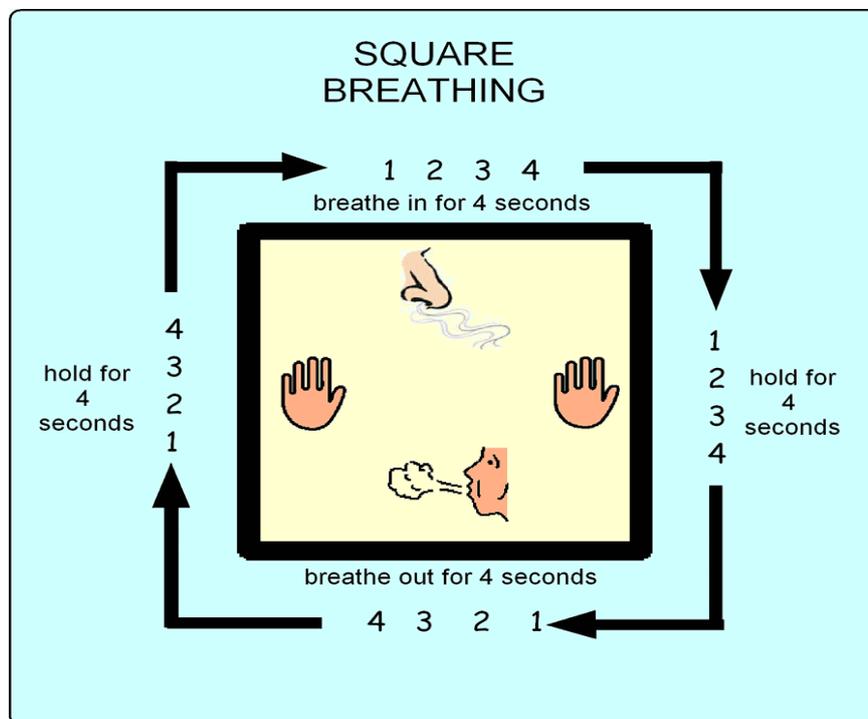
Coping Strategies to support your emotional wellbeing and mental health

Breathing Exercises

Below are a couple of quick, and easy breathing exercises to use when you might begin to feel overwhelmed, frustrated, or anxious.

They work to slow your heart rate and control your breathing to manage the physical effects of stress and anxiety.

Just be cautious if you have any lung or respiratory conditions, and be sure to listen to your body if it is telling you to stop.



Take 10 Breaths

1. Take 10 slow, deep breaths
2. Focus on breathing out as slowly as possible
3. Notice how it feels as your lungs empty and then refill
4. Notice the gentle rise and fall of your shoulders
5. See if you can let your thoughts come and go as if they're just cars passing by your house
6. See if you can notice both your breathing, and then your body, and then the space around you
7. Notice what you can see, hear, touch, and smell in the room

Grounding Exercises

During times of uncertainty and worry it is normal to find ourselves looking to the future or caught up in any number of hypothetical situations, often imagining worst case scenarios. While this is normal, it isn't particularly helpful and can lead us to feel more anxious and worried.

Try to notice when you might be doing this, and then practise the exercises below to see if you can connect to the present moment instead



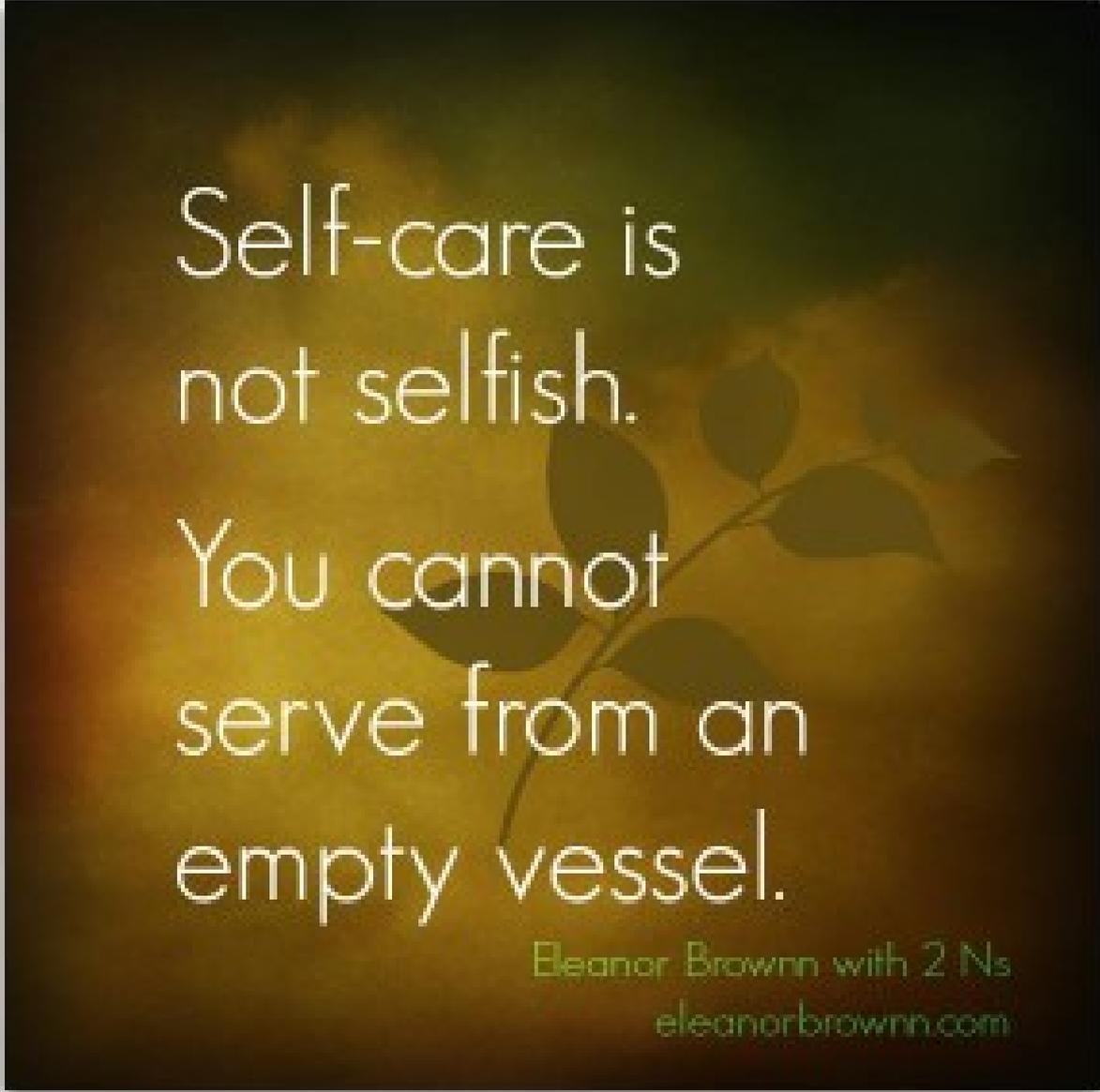
Dropping Anchor

1. You can do this sitting or standing
2. Plant your feet firmly on the floor
3. Push them down, feel the floor beneath you, supporting you
4. Notice the tension in your legs as you push your feet down
5. Notice your entire body, and the feeling of gravity flowing down through your head, spine, legs, and into your feet
6. Now look around and notice what you can see, hear, or smell around you
7. Notice where you are, and how you are feeling

A Final Note

It is ok if you are finding this a difficult time, and if you are struggling to do all the things you have previously managed; many people are in the same situation, and there is no script or 'right' way to do this.

What's important is keeping yourself and your loved one safe, both physically and emotionally. If you are noticing that this is becoming harder to do, use the helplines, services and numbers above to reach out for support, before reaching a crisis point.



Self-care is
not selfish.
You cannot
serve from an
empty vessel.

Eleanor Brown with 2 Ns
eleanorbrown.com