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**Self-Care for Carers**

**One in a series of webinars commissioned by Resilient Rutland to support**

**parents/carers and families**.

## Investing in yourself is investing in your child

When a key part of our lives is caring for someone else, it can become second nature to put everyone else before our selves. But we matter too and it’s important that we recognise that self-care isn’t selfish and that in fact, taking time to look after ourselves leaves us in a better position to step up and be best carer we can possibly be for someone else.

* When we’re the carer self-care becomes hard
* We can’t pour from an empty cup
* We’re a poor role model to our child when we don’t look after ourselves
* We’re less able to be a patient, compassionate carer when we’re running on empty.

What would be the benefits of finding a little time for yourself?

## Find ways to offload

You may be carrying around a lot of worries every day. Worries both about now and the future – these can be pretty heavy and it’s important to find ways to share that load if you can. If there is someone in your life who is happy to listen, this can make a huge difference; but sharing your worries with a dog or a journal can be surprisingly effective.

* Who can you offload to? A friend, a counsellor, a dog, a journal, a helpline?
* Find your tribe – connect with other people in a similar situation, you’ll feel less alone
* Name worries to tame them
* All feelings are valid and need to be expressed
* Build this offloading into your regular routine if you can; little and often works well here

How can you build offloading into your regular routine?

## What can you let go of?

I wouldn’t mind hazarding a guess that you have more tasks than time. People with caring responsibilities seem to be magnets for jobs; maybe because we are kind and caring by nature we seem not only to accumulate our own jobs but we seem to take on the work and responsibilities of others too. It’s hard to do everything well and we’ve got to carve out some time to breathe, so consider what you can reasonably let go of.

* Let go of perfectionism: Be a human not a hero
* Let go of tasks: write a to-don’t list – what can you stop doing?
* Let go of going it alone: be accepting of help; others love to help

Is good enough good enough?

## What would a friend say?

We’re not always especially kind to ourselves and it’s common to find that we have a self-narrative that picks out our failings rather than celebrating our successes. Take a step back for a moment and look at yourself through the more compassionate lens that a friend might look to and imagine how they’d describe you to others. Chances are they’ve got quite a different take on your situation and can see what a remarkable job you’re doing even on the days when you think you’re completely failing.

* Consider what is the kindest version of your story – what are the good bits?
* Wonder why the ‘bad bits’ matter – do they matter to anyone else, will they remember them
* Guilt and shame are wasted energies (advice from Pooky’s friend)
* If in doubt, the death bed test can help put things in perspective.
* Take five to tell a friend what you think of them (in a good way!)

How would a friend describe you?

## Stop and breathe

Learn one or two simple breathing or relaxation strategies and have them in your back pocket for moments of overwhelm. Sometimes we literally just need to take a breath. Stopping, turning away from the situation and take even just one really big breath whilst we gather ourselves can enable us to continue calmly and compassionately for a moment. It can help when we remember that when someone we care for Is pressing our buttons it’s often either distress or their illness talking; look beyond the behaviour and try to connect with the person you love.

* Paced breathing – breathe slowly into to the belly for 4, long exhale for the count of 8
* The power of the mini reset – small regular moments can enable us to manage better
* Breathing alongside someone who is anxious or otherwise distressed calms them and us
* Doing daily tasks in a mindful way can feel restorative; e.g. brush your teeth mindfully

Can you build a mini reset into your daily routine? What would you do and when?

## Who are you?

If a significant amount of your time and mental energy is taken up with caring for the needs of other people, it is quite common to lose our sense of self. Many parents find this when their children start school and this is exacerbated when your child or another family member requires additional support and care. Caring is a wonderful thing to do and we should never be ashamed to identify ourselves this way, however, it’s important that don’t lose sight of the other facets of our personality too and remember who we are outside our caring responsibilities.

* If you had an afternoon completely to yourself how would you most love to spend it?
* What do you do just for fun, or what could you do?
* Invest time into relationships with partners / siblings outside of the person you care for
* Make time for fun or other activities with the person you care for; they’re more than their condition
* Keeping a sense of self-identity makes us a stronger carer and prepares us for the long term
* Build your down time into your diary first; it’s an investment in self and shouldn’t come last

What makes you tick? How can you find time for those things?

### Connect with Pooky

You can connect with Pooky on [Twitter](http://www.twitter.com/pookyh), [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/pookyh), [Instagram](http://www.instagram.com/pookyh), [Facebook](http://www.facebook.com/pookyh) or [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/in/pooky/). You may also be interested in the [books she has authored, edited or contributed to](https://amzn.to/2Yhssmj) and [her podcast](https://pookyh.buzzsprout.com/).

### On-demand training / speaking requests

You can see all our [on demand courses here](https://elearning.creativeeducation.co.uk/available-courses/) (the free ones are [here](https://www.creativeeducation.co.uk/available-courses/?_price=free)) and our [free resources and webinars](https://www.creativeeducation.co.uk/free-resources/) are here. To book a tailored walkthrough of our website and to get your whole staff team 4 weeks’ free access to trial the site, you can [book a slot with me here](https://calendly.com/pookyh/walkthrough). For bespoke speaking or training enquiries, you can [book a chat with me here](https://calendly.com/pookyh/speaking).

**Further support available**

**In crisis**

Should you need urgent health advice contact your GP or call NHS 111. In an emergency visit A&E or call 999.

**Where to go for help**

* In the first instance talk to your child’s school or visit your GP to get advice.
* YoungMinds  [A to Z for parents](https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/for-parents/parents-guide-to-support-a-z/) and free helpline Mon-Fri from 9.30-4pm on 08088025544
* [Rutland County Council Early Help](https://www.rutland.gov.uk/my-services/health-and-family/early-help/early-help-assessments/) has a several offers to support young people and their families.
* [ChatHealth](https://www.leicspart.nhs.uk/service/healthytogether/) for parents to confidentially text school nurses 07520 615382

**Resilient Rutland Resources**

* Visit the [Getting Help](https://resilientrutland.co.uk/getting-help/) section of our website
* Find out more about taking part in our family resilience workshop email: lh@rutlandfirst.co.uk
* Try out our regular coffee mornings email: lh@rutlandfirst.co.uk

**Self-help and information services available for young people**

* [HealthforKids](https://www.healthforkids.co.uk/) website for primary children and their parents
* [Healthforteens](https://www.healthforteens.co.uk/) website for young people age 11 to 19
* [Kooth free online counselling](https://www.kooth.com/) service
* [ChatHealth](https://www.healthforteens.co.uk/health/about-chathealth/) for young people (aged 11-19) to confidentially text school nurses 07520 615387

**www.resilientrutland.co.uk**