

# Advice for Parents and Carers

The support of friends, family and carers can play a very important role in helping someone's wellbeing over the festive period, but can also feel overwhelming. Here's some practical things to remember:

## Make a plan

Sit down and make a plan before things get busy and clearly communicate the comings, goings and events that may affect your loved one's normal routine.

You may also want to remind them of practical considerations, like ensuring they have picked up prescriptions before the upcoming bank holidays.

## Don't let the sun set on arguments

Holding onto the worries and stress of an argument can discourage people from reaching out for help and support when they most need it.

## Give them space

Being sociable or active for a long period of time may make people tired or stressed. Allow them time on their own to re-charge and rest when they need it.

## Dealing with a panic attack

It's understandable to feel frightened if someone you care about experiences a panic attack – especially if it seems to happen without warning. But it can help if you:

- Try to stay calm
- gently let them know that you think they might be having a panic attack and that you are there for them
- encourage them to breathe slowly and deeply – it can help to count out loud, or ask them to watch while you gently raise your arm up and down
- encourage them to stamp their feet on the spot
- encourage them to sit somewhere quietly until they feel better.

## Set boundaries

It's easy to lash out when we're feeling overwhelmed, so be clear on unacceptable behaviour. You don't have to put up with any thing that makes you feel unsafe or seriously affects your own wellbeing.

## Find a balance

Although it can be tempting to take care of everything for someone who is struggling, it's important to encourage them to do things for themselves. Support them to make healthy meals, get fresh air and keep on top of errands, but don't take over.

## Find time to talk

It's important to let people know that you can offer a supportive and non-judgemental ear whenever they need it. Here's some tips:

**No distractions:** pick a place which is calm and suitable for a personal conversation.

**Let them lead:** allow them tell you as little or as much as they need. Don't pressure them.

**You're not an expert:** and that's fine! Don't try to diagnose their feelings or make assumptions, just listen.

**Keep it open-ended:** try neutral questions like 'how are you feeling?' rather than 'I can see you are not okay.'

**Listen carefully:** you can repeat what they have said to ensure you have understood it. You don't have to agree with their feelings, but you do have to respect them.

**Seek support:** These might be simple such as trying one of the exercises in this leaflet, or maybe accompanying them to visit a GP or care team.

If you feel that a loved one is in immediate danger, you need to take action to make sure they are safe. Take a look at the 'Help in a Crisis' page.

