



# WHAT WORKS FOR ME: EXPERT PERSPECTIVES FROM PEOPLE WHO SUPPORT A PERSON WITH PERSONALITY DISORDER

## Background

Supporting someone with personality disorder and also looking after yourself can be challenging, particularly when going through stressful circumstances. We asked family, partners, friends and carers what supports them in navigating through challenging times. The following ideas may also be useful for you.

STRATEGY	WHAT MIGHT THAT MEAN?	EXAMPLE ACTIVITIES
Caring for myself	<p>Slowing down and taking time for yourself is important. It can be helpful to remember your own identity outside the carer role.</p> <p>Self-care can be in routine activities with the specific intention of doing something for yourself.</p> <p>Mindful practice can be a useful way to take your mind away from daily worries.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Going for a daily walk</li> <li>• Enjoying quietness (silence as well as slowing down in activities)</li> <li>• Gardening</li> <li>• Art and craft</li> <li>• Smell the roses</li> <li>• Mindfully having a cup of tea</li> <li>• Observing your surroundings</li> <li>• Mindfully becoming aware using the five senses (taste, hearing, sight, touch, smell) for soothing and grounding yourself.</li> </ul>
Acknowledgement, acceptance and tolerance	<p>It can be painful to accept challenging situations that cannot be changed. This might mean understanding and accepting that we are not perfect, make mistakes, and do unhelpful things when situations are stressful and overwhelming. This can also mean acknowledging and accepting a situation with your loved one that cannot be changed or solved and/or that the person you are supporting does not wish to change or solve it.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning to accept the current situation as it is, knowing that it will pass and trusting that you can cope with it</li> <li>• Asking your loved one if they are needing 'comfort or solutions' in the moment</li> <li>• Engaging in therapy or skill-based courses to feel more confident in how to respond in supportive ways</li> <li>• Practising self-compassion and knowing that you are doing the best you can with what you have.</li> </ul>
Structure, routine and goals	<p>Creating and maintaining as much as practicable a stable routine. Whilst it may be hard to find a good balance in life a routine can bring structure and safety for everyone.</p> <p>Setting small goals or starting with one thing at a time regularly each day can be beneficial for your wellbeing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating and maintaining a daily or weekly routine</li> <li>• Engaging in work or other responsibilities outside of the caring/supporting role</li> <li>• Setting goals to work towards (both big and small)</li> <li>• Focusing on the things that you can control and celebrating the small wins and positive steps along the way</li> <li>• Where possible, negotiating more flexible work arrangements to be able to support your loved one when needed</li> <li>• Giving yourself permission to not be available for support all the time</li> </ul>

STRATEGY	WHAT MIGHT THAT MEAN?	EXAMPLE ACTIVITIES
Understanding and supporting your loved one	<p>It can be painful to see loved ones in distress and doing things that you might consider harmful to themselves or others.</p> <p>Deepening your understanding of your loved one's experiences and challenges can support you to support them during challenging times.</p> <p>You can aim to actively and collaboratively work together.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessing educational resources on diagnosis and evidence-based therapy options</li> <li>• Understanding the behaviours of your loved one in the context of the person's life, and how they may have supported the person to survive challenging times</li> <li>• Accessing your own personal therapy relationship and/or engaging in courses</li> <li>• Joining your loved one in some of their therapy when this is welcome</li> <li>• Learning and practising skills and strategies for yourself</li> <li>• Keeping boundaries realistic, sustainable, and strong is important. They support your loved one to understand and rely on what you can and can't provide.</li> <li>• Encouraging your loved one by supporting them to use the skills and strategies that they are learning during times of distress</li> <li>• Celebrating progress with your loved one</li> <li>• Having frequent contact with your loved one</li> <li>• Open communication on what works with each other</li> </ul>
Connecting with people, communities and culture	<p>It is important to have your own support in place. It can be useful to connect with carer peers who understand your experiences and challenges.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keeping in touch with supports, such as a counsellor, family, friends, neighbours</li> <li>• Connecting with others with similar experiences (such as carer peers or through being part of a personality disorder community/support group)</li> </ul>
Connecting with the natural world	<p>Caring for other living things can support people feel more connected, relaxed and peaceful.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Caring for pets, animals, plants</li> <li>• Being active in a community garden</li> <li>• Going for walks</li> </ul>
Gratitude	<p>Sometimes it can be helpful to try and take a step back and appreciate some of the good things that we experience, even in times of hardship.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practicing gratitude (such as identifying three things a day to be grateful for and writing them down in a journal)</li> <li>• Slowing down to appreciate the positives in life</li> <li>• Cherishing meaningful moments and memories with your loved one</li> </ul>

*This fact sheet is based on discussions between people supporting someone with personality disorder, held in November 2020.*