# Kowhai Programme

# Support for families, whānau & carers

# Managing Fatigue - Carers

It can be one of the greatest honours to care for a loved one who is facing the end of their life. Care giving is a special and rewarding role, but it is also hard work. It is important to take care of yourself and accept help and support from others.

## What is fatigue?

Fatigue is defined as a persistent sense of tiredness, to the point that you cannot do what you normally do. Fatigue is common for people caring for someone with a palliative illness at home and tends to increase throughout the period of care.

It is really important that carers monitor their own health needs and seek treatment as needed.

#### Looking after yourself:

Time out for yourself to re-energise and refresh your body and mind, is just as important as the care you are providing.

#### Remember:

- You do not have to do everything yourself. Prioritise and look at what other people can do to help out.
- Take breaks and do something you enjoy in this time.
- Try and get enough sleep.
- Invite friends around whose company you enjoy.
- Each day schedule an enjoyable activity just for you.

List the activities you find relaxing to remind yourself to make the time to do them:								

#### Relaxation:

Relaxation techniques help people to relax and relieve stress. The trick is finding which ones work for you. Examples of commonly used techniques are:

- Deep breathing
- Mindfulness
- Progressive muscle relaxation
- Meditation

#### Accepting support:

Accepting support is a great way of looking after yourself when caring for someone who is unwell. Accepting support will allow you to use your time wisely and take breaks when you need them.

#### Who could I ask for help?

List the people who have offered to lend you a hand and what they could help you with:

Name	Phone Number	Jobs They Could Do

#### Other supports:

Hospice team: 0800 4736005	
General Practitioner:	
Home help:	
District Nurses:	

#### Organising activities:

Here is some tips to help you prioritise activity and allow other people to help you:

- What is the activity (e.g. cooking dinner)
- How important is the activity? (e.g. high importance)
- When does the activity need to be done by? (e.g. tonight)
- Does it need to be done by me? (e.g. no)
- Could it be done by others? Who? (e.g. Yes, it could be done by my sister)
- Does my loved one mind the activity being performed by someone else? (e.g. No)
- OUTCOME: who will do the activity? (e.g. rang my sister and she will cook us dinner)

## Fatigue and your loved one:

Fatigue may become an issue for the person you are caring for. Throughout their illness your loved one will have good and bad days. This is normal. Some days they may be feeling really tired and unwell, and the next day they may be feeling much more energetic.

Fatigue in some people who are ill may develop gradually over time, and can be very unpleasant and distressing. It is seldom resolved by rest. Your support will be needed throughout these times. There are several ways in which you may be able to help the person you are caring for.

## Here are some ideas to help your loved one:

- Support them to decide what is most important to them, so that you both can make sure you spend your time together well.
- Ask them what time of day do they feel their best and plan how to use this time – this is a good time to have visitors and do activities.
- Plan rest times when they get most tired in the day tell visitors not to come at this time. Ideas to avoid unwanted visitors/phone calls:
  - Put a sign on your door
  - Unplug the phone
  - Switch your cell phone to silent
  - Use your answer phone to screen calls
- Ask visitors to ring first before visiting. If they visit while you are tired, do not feel bad if you ask them to leave and come back another day.

The most important thing is to discuss fatigue with your healthcare team – they are there to help

