

KIRSTY RUSSELL CONSULTING



How to Find Positivity & Support as a Carer

Tackle the challenges

- **Acknowledge the challenges** you are facing, rather than trying to avoid them by keeping busy. Be honest with yourself. Write them down, talk them over with someone or find the time to think it all through in your head.
- A lot of our guilt is driven by our own internal expectations (that we should be doing more or doing things better). We're all doing the very best that we can. Holding onto unnecessary guilt just makes our lives harder so **acknowledge your guilt and let it go**.
- Diagnosis and disability are often seen in a negative light which is reinforced by the systems around us. **Challenge your mindset** and start recognising the strengths, potential and opportunities. List one positive each day to counter the negativity.
- **Focus on what you can control** rather than on what you can't. There are so many things we can't control, such as how others see us or how much support we receive but we can control how we talk about our situation and how we choose to live our lives.

Learn to find the positives

- **Find a carer role model**, someone you can look up to and learn from. Seeing someone else travelling a similar path to you can give you encouragement, motivation and support, also helping you find new ways to approach your caring role.
- **Look for adult role models**, people who share a similar diagnosis to your child or loved one. See what they can do, find out how they live their life, watch them navigate the world and discover the strategies they use to live their best life.
- **Tap into family understanding and support** if you can to get the support you need to stay positive. If you don't have a supportive family around you, create your own village filled with people who lift you up and understand what you're going through.
- **Choose to start looking for opportunities** amongst the challenges. Positivity may not come naturally to you but it's a skill you can practice. Start by looking for one positive each day, however small, and celebrate it.

Find ways to stay positive

- **Make connections with fellow carers.** I've found making connections with fellow parents to be the most important support over the years. Be proactive in making connections with other carers, support organisations, online groups and forums.
- The reality is **self-care should be a daily practice**, something small and achievable that you can commit to each day. Play a game on your phone. Go for a walk or read a book. Watch something on Netflix. Whatever works for you is good.
- **Reclaim yourself**, independent of your carer identity. It's vital we remember who we used to be and what we liked to do before we became carers. What hobbies and interests could you rekindle? Remember who you used to be and reclaim yourself.
- **Ask for help**, even if you're not comfortable in doing so. We can't do everything ourselves. Anticipating when you need help (and actually asking for it) helps reduce stress. Be proactive in asking for it and specific when seeking help.
- **Write things down.** Writing down the positives will remind yourself that life isn't all bad and writing down your fears will help get them out of your brain and onto paper. Often seeing your fears and worries written down takes away some of their power.
- **Know you are not alone.** It might seem that way at times but you're not. That feeling of loneliness and alienation can be overpowering and it can easily bring you down. You are not alone - believe that so you can continue to cling to the positives.

Work on time management

- If you want to make time for yourself you have to **commit to yourself**. You need to make the conscious decision to prioritise your needs and accept they are just as important as the person you're caring for. If you don't do it, you won't find the time.
- **Look at time differently** because we're never going to have the time we think we need to get everything done. Diarise your week, identify ways you could do things more efficiently and carve out little pockets of time just for you.
- **Have a plan** for how you'll spend your time so you don't waste it. It's important to identify the time you have but even more important to have a plan for how you'll spend it. That way you won't waste it on housework or non-you things.

Be open & honest

- **Be open with others** about your situation. You might be worried about sharing your fears as giving voice to them might make them real but the opposite is true. Sometimes venting is enough to release some of the pressure and make things easier.
- **Be honest with yourself.** Ask yourself this question - are you in the best place you can be? If the answer is no, it might be time to change up your coping strategies or consider seeking more specific help and support.
- **Recognise your limitations** and accept you can't do it all. Start by listing all your responsibilities, rate their importance and note your role in them. Use this to identify the tasks you need to keep doing and those you might be able to delegate to someone else.

- **Believe in yourself** and know you are doing enough. When you're under so much pressure and dealing with internal noise, guilt and judgement it can be hard to recognise that you're on the right track and doing a good job. Good enough IS enough.

Access carer resources

- **Go online to find virtual support.** Find connections through Facebook groups, Twitter hashtags, blogs, videos and more. Learn from specialists, experts, advocates and fellow carers via webinars, ebooks, online training and email newsletters.
- **Build a village around you.** Some of the best support available will come from other carers. Relationships built on shared experience can be some of the most valuable you ever cultivate as an adult, giving you the understanding you may not get elsewhere.
- **Community support groups** can really help. The thought of sharing with strangers may seem like the stuff of nightmares but it might provide relief to share the load with others outside your immediate circle but who still have the knowledge and skills to help.
- Attending face to face **workshops, training and information sessions** is an easier way to seek help and support without sharing everything about your life. In addition to gaining new knowledge, these sessions also provide the opportunity to connect with others.
- **Specialists can also help**, whether you seek help for yourself or support from your child or loved one's therapists. While they are engaged to help the person you care for, part of their role is to also support you in following through with therapy at home.
- Engage with **resources designed especially for carers** - the Australian Government's [Carer Gateway](#), the [Carers Australia](#) website, [Carers NSW](#) or your relevant state caring organisation, the [NDIS](#) or [My Aged Care](#).

Online Resources for Parent Carers (focusing on autism)

Facebook	Twitter	Online
Embracing Autism Autism Inclusivity Aspergers from the Inside Kristy Forbes Inclusive Parenting Reframing Autism	Yenn Purkis Elly Chapple Neuro Rebel Agony Autie Pete Wharmby Amanda Kirby	Raising Children Autistic Mama Autism Actually Autism Explained In Tune Pathways TPGA

If you're interested in finding out more, call Kirsty Russell on 0418 669 653, check out www.kirstyrussell.com.au or email hello@kirstyrussell.com.au