

Minds Together for carers

Minds Together for carers is an online program that aims to support and improve the mental health and wellbeing of Australians who love, live with or care for someone experiencing symptoms of depression and/or anxiety.

The development of Minds Together for carers has been based on the learning outcomes of *Partners in Depression*, a national group education program designed to address the information and support needs of those who love, live with or care for a person experiencing depression. It has also been informed by a review of published research literature, and survey completed by 123 carers and interview consultation with 20 carers undertaken between 2018 and 2019.

The Minds Together for carers program is:

- Informed by carers
- Evidence driven
- Designed in collaboration with service providers
- Developed to incorporate capacity building, skill development and knowledge growth.

The program currently contains four modules:

- Module 1: The caring journey – information about mental health and starting to explore the caring journey
- Module 2: Caring for yourself and others – carer journey continued, wellbeing and self-care
- Module 3: What matters to you, and how to talk about it – identifying what is important to participants and how to align these values with actions so as to live a purposeful and fulfilling, independent life outside of their caring journey. Exploring effective communication.
- Module 4: Helpful strategies for everyday life – introduction to tools to help carers to manage their symptoms of anxiety and/or depression.

The program starts with a welcome section and overview of what participants can expect from the program. There is a video that explains how to get the most out of the online program and its functionalities. Participants are guided through each module which includes core content, information sheets, interactive activities, case studies, and videos and podcasts featuring real life carers, clinicians, and others working in the mental health sector. There is a personalised toolbox where activities and information sheets are automatically saved so participants can revisit them and download them for future use.

Why is Minds Together for carers needed?

We know that carers are often the forgotten people in any mental health journey and play a critical role in supporting more than one million people who experience mental ill-health every year. Carers make up the largest non-clinical workforce and save the Australian government in excess of \$14billion every year (according to UQ study).

- We know that caring for someone experiencing depression and/or anxiety is often a really difficult and stressful job.
- Providing care and support to individuals who experience symptoms of anxiety and/or depression can negatively impact on the mental health of carers.
- Prevention strategies significantly lower the incidence of mental ill-health in families, carers and communities.
- Preventing mental ill-health and fostering wellbeing in communities, carers and families benefits those to whom they provide care.
- Building capacity in carers can help to positively enhance their own mental health and wellbeing and the individuals for whom they provide care.

Testing the program

Testing of the Minds Together for carers program will begin in June 2020 with a sample of carers:

- Who currently provide support and care for someone experiencing symptoms of depression and/or anxiety,
- Living in Australia
- Aged 16 years or older
- Comfortable communicating in English
- Who have access to the Internet and a computer.

Eligible participants will complete an **online pre-survey**, following which they will be randomised into one of two groups:

- Program – participants access the program for **six weeks**, before being asked to complete the **post survey**
- Waitlist – participants will wait for six weeks, then be asked to complete a **post survey**, before being given access to the program for **six weeks**.

Results from the testing will be used to assess the usability of the online program and surveys, and whether carers trust, and would recommend the program to others. Findings from the testing will be used to adapt the program and its evaluation in preparation for a Randomised Control Trial later in 2020.

Next steps

Register your interest, by completing our [online form](#) by Wednesday, 1 July or for more information, contact mindstogether@health.nsw.gov.au

This project is one of two in the Minds Together suite of programs and resources designed to inform, empower and support the mental health and wellbeing of families, educators, carers and communities.

*This research project is being conducted by **Everymind**. The project patron, Lucinda Brogden, is Chair of the National Mental Health Commission. A steering committee of key project stakeholder individual, including those with lived experience, and organisations continue to provide feedback at major stages of the project. This research is funded by the Federal Department of Health and has been approved by the Hunter New England Human Research Ethics Committee of Hunter New England Local Health District (Reference 2019/ETH13025).*