

Information for home care workers

Working with older people affected by trauma: How can it affect me and where do I get help?

The people you care for may be affected by trauma, loss and grief. They may feel distressed, act differently, or develop mental health issues. The way trauma looks can be different for each person.

This can be challenging for care providers. For example, some people you work with may refuse to do the things you need them to do because they are anxious, sad, irritable, or grieving.

They may tell you stories about bad things that have happened to them that are hard to listen to.

Some people you care for may become verbally or physically abusive when they are upset or confused.

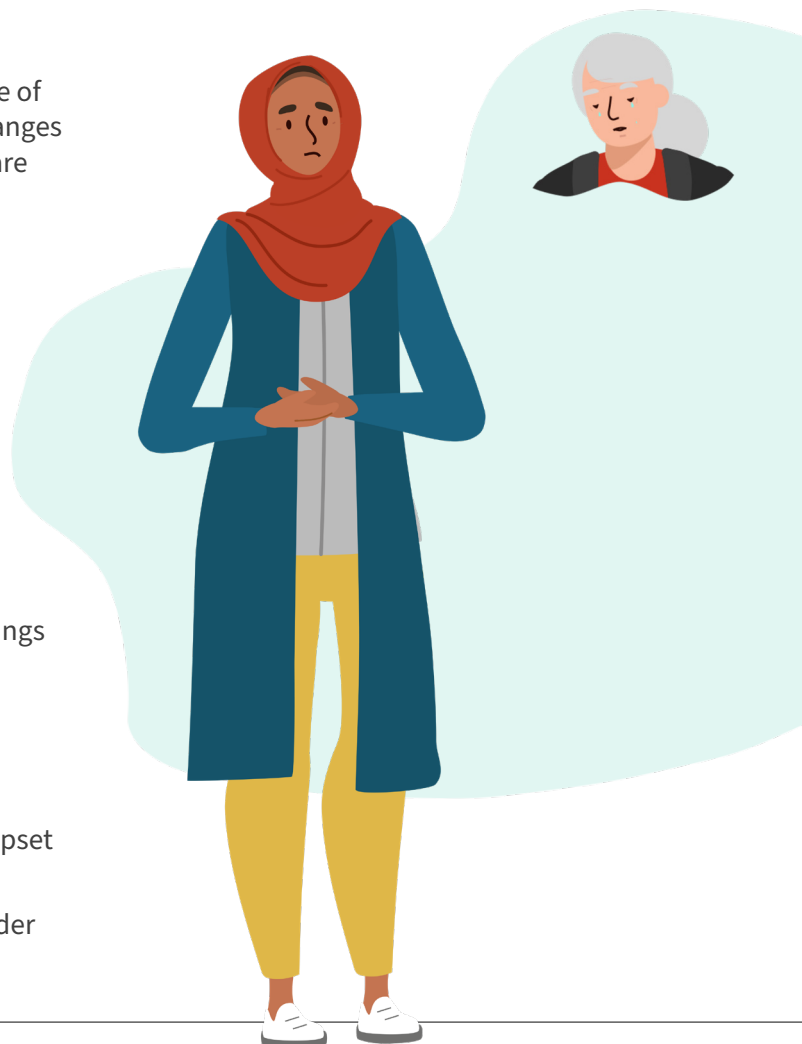
You may be with a person when they die or you may have lost several people under your care over a short period of time.

You may see people not receiving the care they need, and feel like you can't help them.

Common signs you may need help

Look out for warning signs that you need to take care of yourself and get some support. You might notice changes in your body and changes in the way you feel. Here are some examples.

1. Physical signs
 - feeling tired all the time, not sleeping well
 - upset stomach or loss of appetite
 - constant headaches
2. Emotional signs
 - feeling anxious when going to work
 - feeling negative most of the time
 - finding it hard to concentrate or remember things
 - not enjoying your work anymore
3. Behavioural signs
 - taking sick days to avoid going to work
 - avoiding visiting certain clients or becoming upset or irritable with them
 - feeling you can't do enough for the people under your care



Your wellbeing is important. You and your organisation can work together to protect your wellbeing. By taking good care of yourself, you can better support others

Talk to your manager about what is happening with you so they can help you get the support you need. You don't need to wait until things get bad to ask for help.

Talk to a health care professional if you need more help. This could be a doctor, your employee assistance program (EAP), a counsellor or psychologist. You can also talk to family and friends. They can help you feel better.

"I was feeling really exhausted from dealing with all the stress from working alone and some challenging situations with my clients. I decided that I needed to take some 'me' time every day. So now, when I get home, I go for a walk to clear my head. It helps me feel more relaxed and gives me some energy back."



Useful resources

- Beyond Blue 1300 22 4636 www.beyondblue.org.au
- Lifeline 13 11 14
- Nurse & Midwife Helpline 1800 667 877
- Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement (aged care peer support program) 1800 22 22 00; aged.grief.org.au/AgedCare/Resources/Webinars/Peer_Support_Program.aspx
- Head to Health www.headtohealth.gov.au