

Families and Friends of Missing Persons Service

Taking care of yourself when someone is missing

When someone is missing, self-care is more important than ever. Although it may be difficult, making time to look after yourself can help you manage the challenges of the search and can give you the energy you need to get through each day. Here are some suggestions to help you do this.

Focus on your existing skills

Recognise your existing strengths and skills. Write down the things that you know to be helpful during times of stress and make these part of your daily schedule.

Establish a routine

Return to a day-to-day schedule and set small, achievable goals to help restore a sense of predictability and control when everything seems so uncertain. Do this at a gentle pace and recognise each achievement.

“Even though it is difficult in those early days...try and normalise your life as much as you possibly can.”
(Family member)

Connect with others and accept support

Reach out and welcome support from friends, family, community groups, and support agencies. Don't be afraid to let others know what you need. They might be able to help with child-minding, meals, searching, or responding to calls when you need rest. You might also want to think about joining an FFMPs support group.

“I certainly benefitted from the counselling...but...there is so much more to the FFMPs... an opportunity to interact with others is very beneficial and can be therapeutic.” (Father)

Appreciate that everyone responds differently

People have different reactions and beliefs, including within families – this is normal when someone is missing. It can help to talk about these different responses and coping styles.

Some people are open and expressive with their feelings and will want to talk, while others may be more private, and prefer to keep busy. We can respect each other's reactions even if we don't always understand them.

“Accept everyone is dealing with it differently... Be understanding and tolerant of how the other people you love are dealing with the situation and acknowledge that there is no one way that is right.”
(Father)

Look after your physical health

Regular and gentle exercise, sleep, and healthy meals are important and can help manage stress. You can visit healthyliving.nsw.gov.au and consult your GP if you have health concerns and discuss strategies to support your physical well-being.

Remember that rest is crucial. It's okay to take a break from searching. Try to make time for things you enjoy, like listening to music, seeing friends, reading a book, getting a massage, sitting down with a cup of tea, or getting some sunlight.

Look after your emotional health

Recognise that there is no right or wrong way to feel. Emotions can change rapidly.

It might help to:

- acknowledge your feelings by writing your thoughts in a journal or talking to someone you trust
- practise 'kind self-talk' and imagine how you might talk to a close friend in a similar situation
- talk to an FFMPs counsellor about grounding techniques, self-compassion and mindfulness when feeling overwhelmed.

Take care of your work life and your financial needs

A missing loved one can lead to financial stress. Consider speaking to a financial counsellor. You can find a financial counsellor through the Financial Counsellors Association of NSW – fcan.com.au

The National Debt Hotline (1800 007 007) also provides free help managing money and debt and information about emergency relief organisations.

Let your GP and employer know what is happening and if you need leave from work, or adjustments such as reduced hours, more appropriate tasks or breaks. Your workplace may have an Employee Assistance Program.

“I accessed the Employee Assistance Program...I found that being able to come to the workplace, and having that normality, was helpful...” (Mother)

How can we help you?

Families and Friends of Missing Persons Service provides free counselling, information and referrals from trained professionals to people in NSW. You can also get in touch with us for further information or guidance on self-care.

Who should I contact to find out more?

Victims Access Line: 1800 633 063 | **Aboriginal Contact Line:** 1800 019 123

Email: ffmps@justice.nsw.gov.au **Website:** www.missingpersons.justice.nsw.gov.au

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