

Carers Health and Wellbeing check - This check is worth going for.

I've been a carer for years: so many years that it took me a while to actually realise that what I was doing was caring: running around after an increasingly fuzzy-brained mother, disabled husband, and a daughter whose health problems were written off as 'stropky teenager' and went undiagnosed for 5 years... but that's another story. So burning out, not taking time to look after me, putting everyone else's needs first and trying to continue to hold down a full-time job (being the sole bread-winner) was my 'normal'.

When the carer health and well-being checks came around, I was pretty scared: what if they find something wrong? What will happen? Who'll look after the tribe...? But then there's 'if they do find something, I can get it fixed or helped', and 'if they don't find anything, then what a relief!'. All things considered, I went for the check.

I had an hour with a non-judgemental, truly empathic (not wishy-washy) and down-to-Earth nurse who could see into my soul and acknowledged my fears and human failings. I'm overweight – so what? Could be worse; no preaching – just solid advice on how I might manage to avoid the 'bad' fats (have you ANY idea just how many there are and where they hide????).

A small prick of the finger, a few more minutes' helpful talk and – he presto! Cholesterol check done. Blood pressure done; height, weight done and all without my feeling that I was being 'monitored'; all I felt was that I was being enormously helped and understood. My health hasn't changed, but my underlying anxiety about it has! I hadn't realised my anxiety until faced with the choice of having this check – and there it was; scared – just in case. But what if the just in case isn't found out, and just in case becomes 'If only I had...?'

Crucially, something changed for me as a result of this check: in taking that short amount of time for me, with someone who was there entirely for my benefit, allowed me time to reconsider my approach to being a carer; the burden and what I can do to relieve that. I'm a mad keen photographer – not very good, but it is my time and I'd let it slip of late. The check helped me to see that taking this time – even to take monumentally bad photographs – is vital recharging time. It breaks my cycle: fatigue, resentment, anxiety, anger; by injecting 'me time' and what a difference that makes.

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