

HEALTHY AGEING SERVICE

HELPsheet: Navigating the Move into Aged Care

The experience of moving into aged care is likely to be challenging, even if it's your desired wish. There are many reasons why this life change may be a difficult and challenging time.

- You may have had to move into care following a stay in hospital or unexpected illness.
- The decision to move into care may have been a planned or unplanned decision
- The reality of living in a RACF is not you expected

Loss is a significant factor in this transition, for example - loss of home, pets, garden, neighbours, routine, independence, control and privacy. Alternatively, it may be the desired wish of an older adult and be a huge relief now that care needs are taken care of and provide a refreshing new opportunity. Experiences can be positive and negative, and this is normal when making a transition.

Adjustment Stress is a short-term condition that happens when you have great difficulty managing a source of stress such as a major life change, like moving into aged care. Adjustment stress can result in feelings of low mood, increased anxiety, lack of adequate sleep, irritability and loss of identity and control.

Managing Adjustment Stress

Some strategies that have good evidence to support us with improving our mood, coping with adjustment stress, and supporting your transition to living in aged care include:



Behavioural Activation: Doing activities that are meaningful to you and that provide a sense of achievement and enjoyment. For example, watching a movie, spending time outside, or eating meals in the dining room.



Building Social Connections with others is pivotal to our psychological wellbeing at every age, and the connections you make in a RACF can build a safety net for your physical and mental health. Meaningful connections with family, friends, care staff, are known to lower levels of stress and elevate mood and self-esteem. Connecting with your spirituality, culture, and the outdoors can also be a source of comfort and meaning if you're managing difficulties in your life.



A Safe Environment is foundational to our mental health and overall wellbeing as it promotes a sense of security and support our ability to thrive. Unsafe environments can contribute to feelings of helplessness, fear and chronic stress. Creating a safe environment in your room may be done by having photos, blankets, and other items that are meaningful to you.