

Worksheet 6.2: Partners, single parents and the exhausted, isolated carer

See *SBC*, Chapter 10, pp. 132–43 and 149–50.

When there are two parents supporting Edi they can take comfort in the fact that they have each other to turn to at times of distress and they can both quickly develop a collaborative approach ensuring that they are singing from the same song-sheet. Not everyone in a caring role is so lucky and it can be particularly difficult for partners, peers and single parents to feel that they have a good support network around them. Any carer can become exhausted, isolated and feel hopeless and this group are particularly vulnerable.

Imagine you are meeting a friend for coffee. Her husband has anorexia and is refusing to seek outside help. Your friend has told you she is feeling exhausted, isolated and hopeless having had a particularly difficult time with Edi over the past few months. She tells you: 'There is nobody who can help. There is nothing I can do.'

As a group create a menu of options for an exhausted and isolated carer. Write or draw them up on the flipchart. Focus on small achievable and accessible activities and support that might be available within your local community.

For some carers the herd of elephants might seem like a distant dream. This group exercise can help all carers to think about small things they can do at home to re-energise, and any local support groups as well as on line support. The GP is also an option for a distressed and exhausted carer who might need some extra support for themselves. Carers within the workshops also often keep in touch and provide each other with moral support long after the workshops have finished.