

Strategies to maintain my health and wellbeing

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Applying for and getting NDIS funding and a plan package can be a long and difficult process for some people. It can be a confusing and overwhelming time - but remember, the NDIS is helping a lot of people and that everyone applying is new to the NDIS so applying can take a while.

To take care of yourself, think about how you can best keep yourself physically and emotionally strong when applying. Think about what has kept you well in the past, and be aware of what has made you feel stressed or unwell in the past. Ask yourself the question - what keeps me happy, healthy and safe? You may want to consider:

There are many activities and strategies that help you look after yourself. Looking after your health and wellbeing is called self-care. Self-care depends on the individual, and can range from eating well, sleeping enough, exercising and allocating time for fun activities in your life, such as catching up with friends and relatives.

Getting peer support is important in self-care. Peer support occurs when people provide knowledge, experience, emotional, social or practical help to each other. Peer support can be found through contacting the organisations that work directly with people with lived experience of a mental health condition that are [listed here](#).

Other NDIS and mental health peer support is available on Facebook. If you do not use Facebook or other social media maybe one of your goals could be to learn how. Facebook is one way to learn new things and make new friends.

You can also learn and practice relaxation techniques, which are like exercises for your mind. Meditation, breathing exercises, yoga or practicing mindfulness are techniques which can help you cope with feelings of stress or distress which the NDIS process may bring up for you. For more information about and to practice 'mindfulness', please visit this website: smilingmind.com.au

Having regular contact with your GP or other service providers can help you look after yourself. If you do not have one you could talk to your GP about creating a Mental Health Care Plan, which can help provide ongoing mental health treatment and care, including access to a psychologist. For more information about Mental Health Care Plans please visit the below website: www.health.gov.au

Finally, it is important to know about how to tell your story safely when you tell it to the National Disability Insurance Agency or anyone, which we will explore in the next section. Remember that you are the expert of your own life. Your lived experience makes you the expert in what supports you need to keep yourself well, and what can support you on your recovery journey.

As part of applying for the NDIS, you will need to share personal information about your circumstances and what services you think would improve your life. You may need to tell your story many times to different people - your GP, your Local Area Coordinator or a National Disability Insurance Agency planner, as well as the person you have chosen to support your decision-making. This may occur at each stage of accessing the NDIS .

Completing the reimagine.today workbook may reduce the need for you to tell your story over many times during access and planning. You can share your workbook with people who want to know more about you.

You may need to talk about how your mental health affects your day-to-day life, how it impacts you on a

personal level, as well as identify what your support needs are on your best days and on your worst days. You may need to think back to when you have not been doing well and repeatedly have to explain that experience, which may have been very difficult or even traumatic for you.

Sometimes you may need or want to go over the details of what you experienced. Some of the people you will talk to will be under time pressure, or seem to not listen or understand your story. If retelling painful or traumatic events of your life, this can be an overwhelming experience. This is why safe storytelling, and having strategies in place to manage the risk of telling your story in an unsafe way are important.

This important resource is available to help you learn more about telling your story safely:
“Speaking Our Minds: A guide to how we use our stories” www.ourconsumerplace.com.au

Advice from other NDIS participants

These are a few strategies from other NDIS participants, on what helped them look after themselves when accessing the NDIS:

- Have an advocate, carer, peer or support worker, who you trust and who understands what you want, support you through the application and planning processes. They can assist you with gathering evidence and filling out paperwork, if you are anxious or stressed about that.
- Bring a support person or advocate to your access and planning meetings to help explain your situation and the support you want. A support person or advocate can make sure the planner understands your aspirations and goals. Speak to them before the meeting and tell them what you want them to do or say. You may want them to be there for moral support and stay silent. Or you may want them to prompt you if you forget something or lose track of what you were saying. Or you may want them to speak for you. It's best to decide this before the meeting so you can prepare together so they know your wishes.
- Ask someone to sit with you and go through all the information and help explain NDIS language and details.
- Talk to peer networks and others who have applied for the NDIS. Find out how the processes worked for them. This will help you prepare for the application process, as well as help you with tips that worked for them. It can be very reassuring to talk to people who have been there, and who understand what you are going through and what you may expect in future.
- If it's easier and less taxing for you to write than to speak, write down as much as possible and show this to the National Disability Insurance Agency staff or Local Area Coordinator.
- Arrange to have catch-ups with a friend, family member, peer, support worker, counsellor or psychologist to debrief.

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