

Carers Week is an annual campaign to raise awareness of caring, highlight the challenges unpaid carers of all ages face and recognise the contribution they make to families and communities. For more details click [here](#).

The theme for Carers Week this year is 'Caring about Equality'. Calling for an equal society where carers are truly valued, recognised and supported. Carers Week provides a vital opportunity to raise awareness of the challenges facing carers and to connect more carers to available support.

A carer is anyone who looks after a family member or friend who has a disability, mental or physical illness or who needs extra help as they grow older. Caring's impact on all aspects of life from relationships and health to finances and work can be significant. Whilst many feel that caring is one of the most important things they do, its challenges should not be underestimated. Caring without the right information and support can be tough. It is vitally important that we recognise the contribution carers make to their families and local communities, workplaces and society, and that they get the support they need.

Caring for someone has many positive and rewarding aspects to it and it can be the most loving thing you can do for someone else. It can, however, also be challenging, leaving you feeling exhausted and in some cases can be extremely lonely and isolating. If you find you are struggling it is important to ask for help and support.





Caring for elderly parents

Our parents bring us up and do everything for us when we are children, so it can come as a shock when they start to require care themselves. As people age or develop disabilities, you may need to ask for help to take care of elderly parents.

Persuading parents to accept help can be difficult, but it's important that everybody is open and honest about their hopes and fears. Explain to your parents that you are worried they are struggling to manage.

A big decision you and your parents may have to make is about whether they will receive at-home care or if they will move into a residential care home, this may consist of sheltered housing, assisted living or a nursing home. Talk to specialists and those involved in your parents' care, such as their GP, any social workers involved or staff at care homes. Ensure you involve your parents and ask them their views.

Caring for someone with dementia

Caring for someone with Dementia can be daunting, challenging, and exhausting. Here are some things to consider.

Accept support – this support may come from other members of your family, a professional or a support group. Just don't be afraid to accept or ask for help. This help will allow you to take a break and have some time to yourself.

Be empathetic - as a carer compassion and empathy are at the heart of what you are doing. Be patient and understanding, don't criticize and judge.

Look after their overall wellbeing – make sure the person with dementia regularly has their physical health monitored and ensure they receive the appropriate health advice or treatment. It's important they remain active, eat a balanced diet and get enough sleep.

Dementia specific support - seek out advice, support, education, and training. This could involve investigating local services, joining a social or peer support group.

Be positive – focus on their strengths and think about what they can still do, rather than what they can't. Prioritise things that bring them peace and joy and avoid negative comments.

Be realistic – those with dementia will have good and bad days. Be realistic about the course of the disease, remember that most types of dementia are irreversible and progressive.

Plan ahead – when caring for someone with dementia things will change, so you should prepare for a time when your loved one may need more care than you can provide, this may be provided from a professional coming into their home each day or with your loved one moving into a residential setting. You will need to prepare yourself for this emotionally and plan financially for this change.

For more information read our guide [here](#).

Caring for someone with a disability

Looking after someone with a physical disability can be physically demanding for you as a carer. An important part of your role is to make sure the person you care for has the best quality of life possible by helping them to be as independent as possible.

There is no ideal way to care for someone with a disability. Each person is different, each with a different disability. Here are some things you can do to help make life as a carer that little bit easier for you both:

Take time to understand their illness or condition - the term disability is varied. It's therefore important for you to research the disability itself to help understand the challenges it's likely to present. This knowledge can help you empathise more with your loved one.

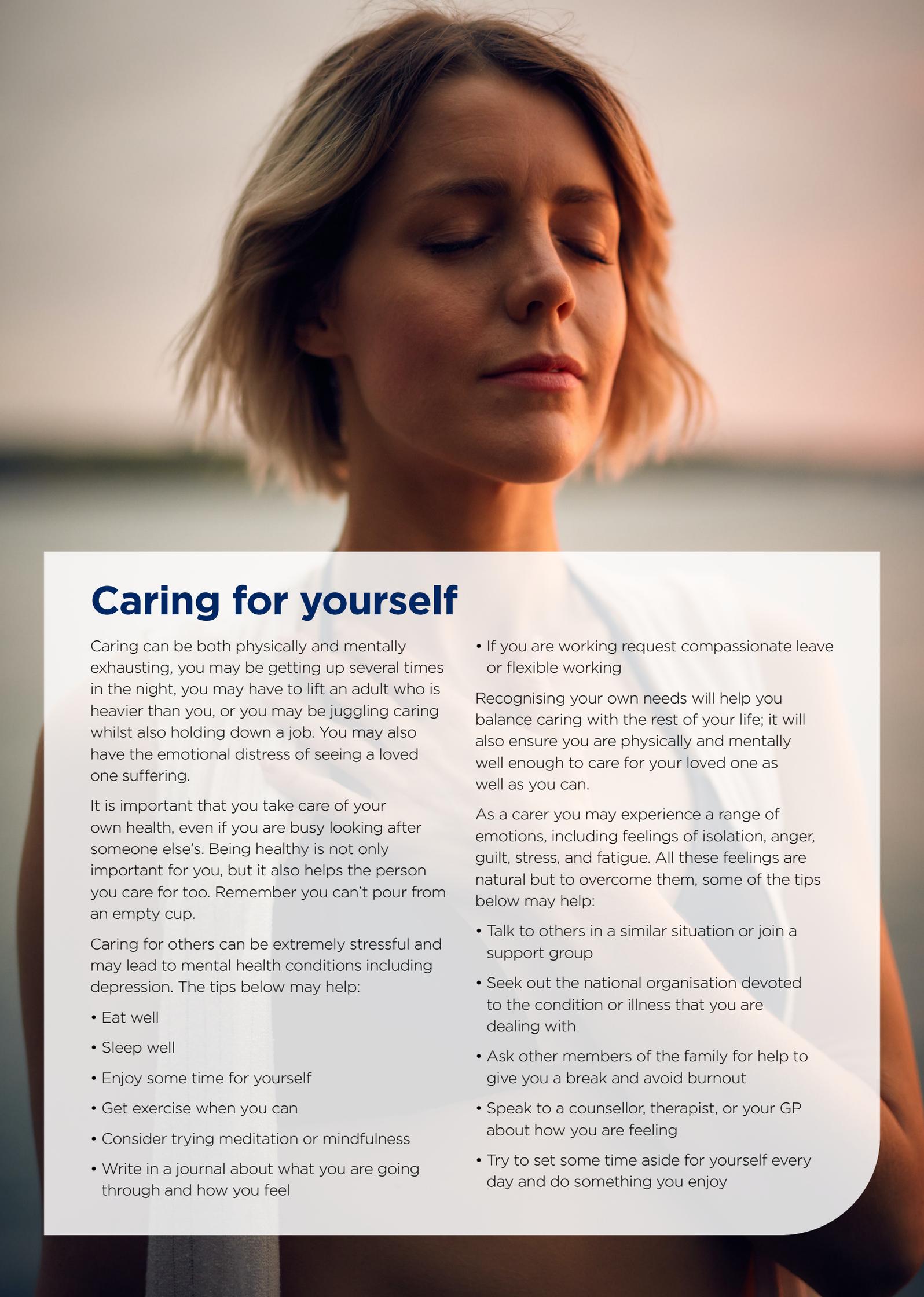
Focus on their abilities rather than their disabilities - when caring for a disabled person at home, it's easy to focus on what they can't do and do it for them. In order to be as independent as possible, it's important to try to encourage them to do as many of the things they can themselves, and only step in when they really need help.

Think ahead - all types of disabilities will present unexpected challenges every day. Planning for emergencies in advance can enable you to respond as well as possible to the unexpected.

If you can it's useful for you to attend health appointments with your loved one where possible, taking a list of questions with you so that you can be fully informed.

Another thing you might want to think ahead about is making legal arrangements. For instance, has your loved one made a will and do they have a power of attorney in place.





Caring for yourself

Caring can be both physically and mentally exhausting, you may be getting up several times in the night, you may have to lift an adult who is heavier than you, or you may be juggling caring whilst also holding down a job. You may also have the emotional distress of seeing a loved one suffering.

It is important that you take care of your own health, even if you are busy looking after someone else's. Being healthy is not only important for you, but it also helps the person you care for too. Remember you can't pour from an empty cup.

Caring for others can be extremely stressful and may lead to mental health conditions including depression. The tips below may help:

- Eat well
- Sleep well
- Enjoy some time for yourself
- Get exercise when you can
- Consider trying meditation or mindfulness
- Write in a journal about what you are going through and how you feel

- If you are working request compassionate leave or flexible working

Recognising your own needs will help you balance caring with the rest of your life; it will also ensure you are physically and mentally well enough to care for your loved one as well as you can.

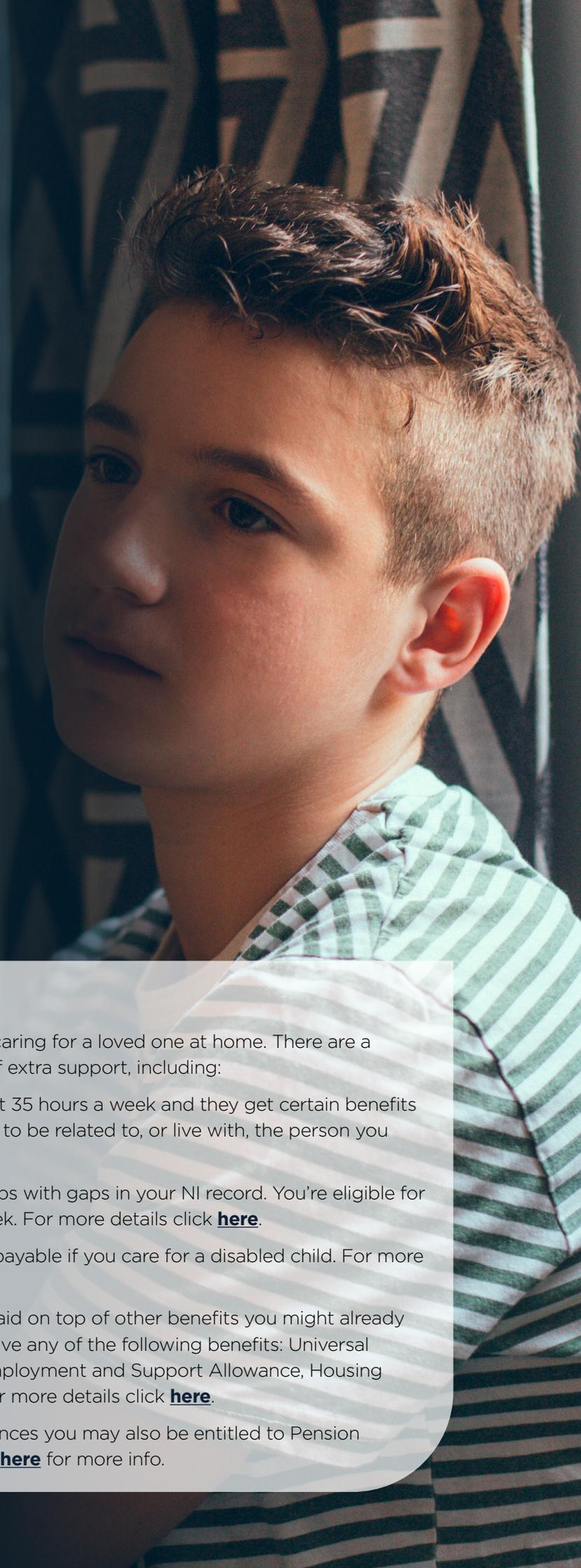
As a carer you may experience a range of emotions, including feelings of isolation, anger, guilt, stress, and fatigue. All these feelings are natural but to overcome them, some of the tips below may help:

- Talk to others in a similar situation or join a support group
- Seek out the national organisation devoted to the condition or illness that you are dealing with
- Ask other members of the family for help to give you a break and avoid burnout
- Speak to a counsellor, therapist, or your GP about how you are feeling
- Try to set some time aside for yourself every day and do something you enjoy

Young carers

A young carer is someone under 18 who looks after a parent or other family member who is ill or helps them by looking after other members of the family while they can't. They take on physical and emotional duties like bathing and dressing of the person they are caring for or cooking meals for younger siblings and helping them to get ready for school and bed each day.

It can be hard work, scary at times and isolating and may lead them to miss school or being bullied. Many young people cope well with caring, especially if you have support from other family members, but it's important for them to look after themselves. This may involve talking to a teacher or school counsellor. There is also lots of organisations providing help, like Young Minds and Barnardo's.



Financial assistance for carers

Having the right financial aid can really help when caring for a loved one at home. There are a range of different benefits that offer that little bit of extra support, including:

Carer's Allowance - if you care for someone at least 35 hours a week and they get certain benefits you could get a weekly allowance. You do not have to be related to, or live with, the person you care for. For more details click [here](#).

Carer's Credit - a National Insurance credit that helps with gaps in your NI record. You're eligible for this if you care for someone at least 20 hours a week. For more details click [here](#).

Disability Living Allowance for Children - may be payable if you care for a disabled child. For more details click [here](#).

Carer Premium - an additional amount of money paid on top of other benefits you might already be claiming. You can claim the premium if you receive any of the following benefits: Universal Credit, Income Support, Jobseeker's Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance, Housing Benefit, Pension and Tax Credits, or Council Tax. For more details click [here](#).

Additionally, depending on your age and circumstances you may also be entitled to Pension Credit and additional local welfare assistance. Click [here](#) for more info.

Support & Sources of Information

[NHS](#)

[Gov UK](#)

[Carers Trust](#)

[Young Minds](#)

[Barnardo's](#)

[Age UK](#)

[Carers UK](#)

[Citizen Advice](#)

Police Mutual Services

Worrying about money can be extremely stressful and may lead to mental health conditions. Police Mutual are here to help. We want to break down the stigma surrounding debt and get people talking about money.

We've teamed up with [PayPlan*](#), one of the UK's leading free debt advice providers, who offer free and confidential advice to anyone in serious financial difficulties.

They're able to advise you on a range of debt solutions suited to your individual circumstances, helping to protect you and your family with a sustainable way to manage your debt.

Get free and confidential help to combat your debt, call [PayPlan*](#) on **0800 197 8433**.

Our Care Line Service provided by Health Assured can offer advice and information, helping with a range of concerns including emotional support.

To read more of our wellbeing guides take a look at our Wellbeing Hub [here](#).

Call us **0151 242 7640** Visit [policemutual.co.uk](#). We're open from 9am - 5pm Mon - Fri

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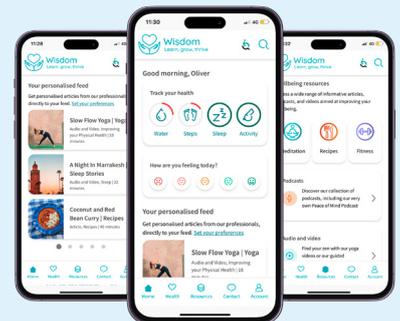
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