

# Caring for the Carer

Patricia Murray

I was asked by Cork C/CCCs to do a workshop at their recent Conference for Childminders, with “Caring for the Carer” as the topic. I enjoyed the conference very much – the Clarion Hotel was a magnificent venue, and I appreciate very sincerely when a City or County Childcare Committee includes *Childminding Ireland* in the programme. It is demonstrating good co-ordination and collaboration between agencies, which is the approach underpinning the success of the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme.

It was also a great experience for me to meet again some Childminding stalwarts who have been members of *Childminding Ireland* for many years, like Irene Corkery and Alice Ann O’Leary, both looking wonderful and glamorous!

The workshop went down well, from the feedback given, and so I thought I would share the points discussed with you in this newsletter. This topic is particularly relevant coming towards the Christmas Season – which places an extraordinary amount of additional tasks on the Carer in the home.

Also the question of a professional approach was discussed, and some Childminders were interested in the writing of “Policies” for their Childminding Service, and I have added some pointers here (see page 3). Work/Family Balance and the importance of the Role of the Childminder were also included in the workshop.

As we approach the end of yet another successful year, and just after our magnificent conference which was formally opened most graciously by President McAleese, I am delighted and sometimes a little amazed at how the little National Childminding Association of Ireland of the 1980s and 1990s has grown and blossomed into *Childminding Ireland* - - the strong, confident professional body we are today. It is time for all of you who helped that process, to take a bow and a warm thank you again, from me and our current Board of Directors. You built *Childminding Ireland* as Committee Members, then as former Board Members, as County Contacts, as committed staff members and former staff members, and volunteers (sometimes family members and their friends, virtually kidnapped for the use of their artistic or computer skills!) and most especially as Childminders joining up. You are now over 700 strong, and the number of members is rising steadily.

## Make a cuppa, put your feet up and check yourself out under the lists!

### Physical

Diet and Exercise  
Avoid or deal with stress  
Sport  
Self pampering

### Intellect

Keep learning  
Do Sudoku, and do it with the kids

### Language

Learn a new language  
Balance reading with TV  
Do crossword puzzles

### Emotional

Identify and avoid draining relationships  
Avoid being the “Carer” in every relationship  
Get Help—everyone needs emotional help from time to time.  
Put the most important person in your life **first**.  
Spend money on yourself

## Getting the Work/Family Balance right!

Shared interests—do things with your partner and children.  
Don’t be available to everyone all of the time—including your extended family  
Limit additional commitments  
Respond quickly and purposefully to your family member’s worries  
Turn household chores into learning activities—get them done with the children!  
Your children’s friends—welcome them, but you run a business in your home—set them tasks.  
Put you, your partner and children first, your work, friendships, hobbies and recreation second.

### Social

Mixed gender activities  
Join clubs  
Join networks  
Get a Childminder Buddy  
Nurture your friendships