



Case study one

Eve



My name is Eve. I'm a single mum and I work as a part time administrator at a local college. I've got two kids Matt and Joanne. Matt is 17, Joanne is 15. Matt is studying for A levels but it's a difficult time for him right now. He has Crohn's disease and it's always been challenging but at the moment he's really finding it frustrating how much it gets in the way of his life. So I feel like I really need to be there for him at the moment.

My mum died four years ago, dad lives close by, he has early onset dementia and he's not in great health because he had a heart attack two years ago. I have to do quite a lot to support him because he's finding it more difficult to do the day to day stuff that you just take for granted. I did arrange for an assessment and now he has a home care team who visit him every morning to check on him and supervise his medication which does really help, but they're worried that he's somehow getting at his medication and I'm not quite sure what to do about that. I can't be there to watch him all the time and I'm aware that he's only going to need more support as time goes on. I don't really quite know how I'm going to manage that.

I've given up the things I used to do for myself like swimming and singing in a choir because it felt selfish to be doing those things when everyone needs so much. I don't really see my friends anymore because I'm always on call really. There doesn't seem to be enough time to do everything. I really need to try to get more hours at work to make ends meet but, at the same time, I'm so busy that I don't know how I'm going to do that.

I don't resent making choices that I have for my family but I do wish I had more support. It's hard dealing with everything on my own and sometimes I just feel like I don't really have a normal life anymore, I just exist to meet other people's needs.

I'm worried about Joanne too. I love my kids equally but I'm aware that I'm having to spend a lot more time and attention on Matt at the moment and Joanne is kind of missing out. She feels like she doesn't really get any of my time and I don't blame her but I can't see how to change that when other people need me first. At least she's healthy and I tell myself she can look after herself pretty well.

It's all starting to feel a bit like a spiral, I don't really know what to do because I'm not sleeping well and as I get more stressed and tired I just feel worse and worse. I have bad stomach aches and sometimes just feel sick. When I'm out doing the shopping I look at everyone and it feels really unreal I just don't feel part of that anymore.

I tried going to a carer's group it was recommended, but hearing everyone else just talking about their problems made me feel really depressed. Sometimes when I can't sleep I do go on carer forums at night. It's a place where I can talk about how I feel and I feel like it helps. That social worker could see that I was starting to struggle with things and he referred me to my GP for a carer's assessment. It was really nice having someone just listen and a social worker came out twice to see me and talk to the kids as well and I feel quite hopeful really because I've got a care support plan now to try and make things a bit more manageable. So we'll see what happens next.