

The Art of Asking for Help

Asking for help can be uncomfortable. When we are growing up, many of us are trained to be independent and to take care of things on our own. People may say, “Let me know if there’s anything I can do to help,” but you are just unable to take them up on their offer. It’s important to remember that asking for help doesn’t make you selfish. Asking for help doesn’t mean you are doing a poor job at caregiving.

Despite the discomfort, getting help with caregiving is important. No one can manage all the aspects of caregiving on their own. The art of asking for help can be difficult to do, but can ease your workload and allow someone else the opportunity to have a special connection to your loved one. Not everyone wants to take on the hands-on parts of caregiving, but they could be great shoppers, housekeepers, errand runners, or secretaries. Below are duties that you could consider sharing with another person and ways to ask for help.

Duties you can share

- Going to the grocery store
- Picking up medication
- Helping you with buy cards or gifts for special events (birthdays, holidays, etc.)
- Driving and/or accompanying the patient to appointments or errands
- Preparing and delivering a meal for you and your loved one
- Taking care of pets; walking the dog
- Taking care of plants, gardening, lawn work
- Housekeeping and laundry
- Spending time with your loved one so you can get some time away for yourself
- Serving as the contact person to keep others updated on your loved one’s needs or progress

How to share the load

- **Be realistic.** Caregiving is demanding. There's only so much you can do on your own.
- **Test the waters.** Go ahead and ask.
- **Suggest specific tasks.** Keep a list of ways you need help, so you'll be ready with suggestions if someone offers. Perhaps a neighbor could do some yard work or pick up your groceries. A relative could sort bills or fill out insurance papers. A friend might take your loved one for a daily walk.
- **Consider abilities and interests.** If your loved one enjoys cooking, ask a helper



to involve them with meal preparation. Suggest a specific day or days of the week. A helper who likes to drive might be able to provide transportation to doctor's appointments. Someone who enjoys books might read aloud to your loved one. Encourage your helper to identify and commit to those activities that match their abilities.

- **One more thing.** It's okay to accept help even if your loved one isn't happy about it.

There are tools to help

- Consider adding *Lotsa Helping Hands*, a calendar and messaging system geared toward organizing support:

<http://lotsahelpinghands.com/how-it-works/>

Additional information and tips

- HelpGuide.org

<http://www.helpguide.org/articles/caregiving/caregiving-support-and-help.htm>

- Daughterhood.org

<http://www.daughterhood.org>