

Caregiving in
The Comfort of Home®

Caregiver Assistance News

"CARING FOR YOU... CARING FOR OTHERS"

Conflicts & Family Dynamics

Whether with our own family, or in a professional caregiver relationship, we need skills to communicate effectively. The *right words* can make all the difference.

Tips for effective communication:

1. **Assess the situation.** Listen to every member of the family or person in the group to figure out what the issue really is. Look for meaning and emotions behind what is being said.
2. **Let them know you understand.** You can share their feelings without getting overwhelmed by their issues.
3. **Try to be a reporter, not a judge.** Instead of saying, "It is wrong for you to smoke and you are hurting yourself," try, "I notice that you are having trouble breathing and it's getting worse from smoking."
4. **Maintain personal balance.** Allow yourself time to decompress and have a separate life with your own activities and down time. Find people you can confide in when you are puzzled or overwhelmed. Join a support group if you feel isolated.
5. **Avoid guilt, depression, and judgments.** You can grieve, feel frustrated or overwhelmed, and know these are normal feelings. Accept the tough outcomes and still feel good that you gave it your best.

Listening is More Important than Talking

Have you ever *acted* like you were listening to someone who was talking, but in reality you were thinking about what you were going to answer the other person when it's your turn to talk or thinking about something else? Many of us are guilty of not *really* listening to what others say. Ways to improve listening skills:

- ✓ Try not to interrupt someone who is talking.
- ✓ Try to really hear their words and repeat back what they have said. This way, they know that you really *heard* was what they said. (Then they might also be more willing to listen to *you*.)
- ✓ Avoid being defensive.
- ✓ Remember to show respect to the other person—even if you do not agree with his actions or words.

Effective communication leads to mutual understanding. It helps both parties find a solution to a problem. This means that your goal is not to win an argument or prove that you are right, but to *reach an understanding*.

Source: Adapted with permission from a presentation by Mark Edinberg, Ph.D., author of the book, "Talking with your Aging Parents™"



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Setting Your Boundaries

How can you take care of yourself when the demands on you are increasing? Clear, polite but firm, communication can help. Here's an example:

A caregiver is asked by her father (or a client) to do a task that would keep her beyond her scheduled hours. She wants to be helpful and has a hard time saying "no," but knows that she can't take on more tasks right now.

Good communication can include the following responses:

1) "I'm sorry. I'd like to be able to do that task for you, but I have family commitments starting in one hour. Why don't we get to that next week at the beginning of the day, so I can finish it properly for you."

OR

2) "I know you'd like for me to stay longer with you today, but I need to get back and take care of my children (or other clients). Why don't I bring you a TV schedule and set out a cup of tea so you can relax after I leave."

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Being Heard

Sometimes communication is made more difficult by the simple fact that the senior is hard of hearing. A person with hearing loss may appear like they are slow or uninterested. Speak in a normal tone, facing the person, and making eye contact. Check if they are using their hearing aid. To make communication effective:

- Be in a position where you are **at eye level** with the person. Make eye contact while *facing* the person.
- Allow the other person to **see your face in the light** so they can see your facial expression and lip movements.
- Avoid startling a person, **approach him from the front** and say who you are as you approach.
- **Call them by name.**
- Speak in **simple language**, using **normal tone**. Do not shout or use a high pitch.
- Ask **one question at a time**.
- **Don't interrupt** the person while he is talking.
- Use **appropriate body language** (pointing, nodding, etc) and facial expressions.
- Aside from their **hearing aid**, some people need their **eyeglasses** to see you better when communicating. Make sure they have these and that they are working properly.

Taking Care of Yourself— The Simple Joy in Just Hang Out

Many adults are accustomed to only doing scheduled activities with one another. Often, we think time spent together must be structured—exercising, going to a movie or shopping together. We don't think something is beneficial unless it's productive. Teenagers enjoy hanging out with friends, but as we get older and more scheduled, we lose the ability to enjoy simply being with a friend and chatting or even being silent. Social media shows a trending desire for a "couch friend" — a buddy that will sit with you on the couch and happily do nothing.

Friendships improve our physical and mental health and are vital for our well-being. If you are not quite sure how to start, you might look for places in your community where people gather—a dog park, a community center, or simply a park bench and invite your friend to join you to simply watch the world go by.

Source: New York Times; Well – Why Don't We Hang Out Anymore? February 2024; "Hanging Out: The Radical Power of Killing Time" by Sheila Liming



Live Life Laughing!

While I pick up my vitamins I'm getting my flu vaccination.

Yeah? Maybe I'll give it a shot.



Inspiration

Half our problems are just our minds making minor things seem like major things.

Memory Care - Be Kind

The tone of our voice can mean more than the words that we actually say. Singing, dancing, hugging, holding, and other body actions are some of the ways we can communicate to people in our care who have lost the ability to understand spoken or written language.

Caregiving in The Comfort of Home®

Our Purpose

To provide caregivers with critical information enabling them to do their job with confidence, pride, and competence.

Ordering Info

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SAFETY TIPS— Keeping a Lid on Anger

When communication fails, stress levels go up. Higher stress is associated with heart attacks, high blood pressure, digestive problems, chronic pain, reduced lung function and more severe diabetes symptoms—even skin flare-ups. You can stay healthy, and help those in your care stay healthier, by asking yourself these questions to help reduce stress and avoid anger triggers:



- ➔ **Is what I am arguing about really important?** Pick your battles and let the small stuff go.
- ➔ **Am I storing up resentments** from the past that are making things seem worse in this conversation? Stay on the topic—don't bring past issues into the current discussion.

Don't take it personally. Resist the urge to keep score. Be polite and keep your boundaries. You don't need to get angry just because you don't like what someone is saying.