

"I am so exhausted caring for my husband. My family must think I'm not doing a very good job because they said I need to get some help. Why don't they help me?"

Asking For Help

It's so easy to become isolated you lose sight of your own life when you provide care for someone else. As a caregiver, you may feel overwhelmed with responsibilities. Maybe you believe that

- You must provide all the care
- Your family won't help
- It is a sign of weakness to ask for help
- You can't afford to get help
- The care receiver will get upset

These barriers can lead to distress, loneliness and exhaustion. You can become a second patient if you aren't careful.

What is preventing you from seeking help?

Overcoming Barriers

Overcoming barriers to feel comfortable and asking for help may require you to make some changes in your attitude toward your responsibilities. This can be difficult, but it is necessary. Begin by realizing that you may not be able to do it all. It's not a sign of weakness to ask for help. You need to care for yourself as well as the care receiver. By seeking help as early as possible, it can give the care receiver time to get used to others and possibly feel less dependent on you.

Steps in overcoming barriers

- Identify what kind of help is needed.
- Find out what resources are available.
- Keep a positive attitude.
- Acknowledge that you can't do it all yourself.

How can I overcome the barriers preventing me from seeking help?

Finding Help

How do you find help? Family members, friends, agencies and support groups are vital for providing assistance.

Your family or friends can be the first place to seek support.

- Share your situation and concerns.
- Ask for help for specific tasks. Don't expect others to know what you need.
- Speak with respect: say, "I need help." not "You need to help me."
- Begin seeking assistance when your needs are smaller.
- Look for help from local agencies and services. Begin by contacting the Illinois Department on Aging Senior Helpline at 1-800-252-8966 or go to their website at www.state.il.us/aging. They will provide contact information for local services and support groups.
- Seek help through a local caregiver support group. They can provide the emotional support, practical information, and friendships that can be vital during this time in your life.

List the services, family members, friends, agencies, and support groups that can provide you with the needed assistance:

Family and Friends:

Agencies:

Support group contacts:

Asking for help will enable you to remain healthy and provide the best possible care. Make a plan and most importantly, carry it out. It's never too late.

For more information, read:

Caring for Yourself While Caring for Your Aging Parents- How to Help, How to Survive-3rd edition, by Claire Berman, Holt Paperbacks, 2005.

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Caregiving Relationships: For People Who Care for Adults

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