Caregiver Communication: Taking Care of You

MSCOE Caregiver Conference Call

April 28, 2014

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Emotional Impact of Caregiving

(Seagulls of Veterans – Serving the Homefront Study, 2010)
Communicating to Take Care of You

• Limit Setting
  – It’s hard to set limits with others!
  – Communicates to others you are taking care of yourself
  – Practice makes it easier
  – Only you know your limits
  – Limits can be flexible
If you don’t set limits

• Feelings of resentment
• Burnout – Hard to provide help when needed
• Family concern for your health
• Health problems develop
• Stress
• Fatigue
Consequences of Setting Limits

• What would be the worst outcome?
  – How would I handle it?
• What are the consequences if I do nothing?
• What’s the best that can happen?
Limit Setting

• Start small
• Start with easy people
• Start with easy situations
Communicating your Limits

• Be clear with your limits
  – Use “I” statements
    – “I am happy to help you after work tonight but I have to leave by 7:00.”
  – Formula:
    – “Up to this point I can do ______”
    – “Beyond this point I will do ______ or _____happens.”
Offer choices within your Limits

• Replace what you can’t do with what you can do
  – “I can’t take you shopping today, but I can on Saturday afternoon or Sunday morning. Which would you rather do?”
Make No Excuses

Give **Factual Reasons** to aid understanding

• “I’d like to do that but for now I can only handle these three things.”

• “I appreciate your suggestions. Right now I can’t fit them into my day.” (a good response for unsolicited advice!)

• “I need some time to think about it. I’ll let you know tomorrow.” (gives you time if you feel like making excuses or a guilt trip or flattery undermine your resolve.)
Asking for Help

• You are not falling short when asking for help
• It is a caregivers responsibility to ask for help.
• “Please pass the salt” strategy:
  – We expect to ask for salt in order to receive it...we also need to ask for help we need in caregiving.
Please Pass the Salt…

• Consider person’s special abilities and interests when asking them to help
  – Likes to cook…ask them to help cook dinner
• Don’t ask the same person repeatedly
• Timing the request
• List of things to do…let them choose
• Be prepared for “no”
• Use “I” statements:
  – “I would like to go to church on Sunday, could you stay with Suzie from 11-1?"
• Use “I” statements to express appreciation:
  – “I want to thank you for staying with Suzie so I could go to church today. It meant a lot to me.”
Action Plan

• Write one goal for expressing yourself
• What, with whom, when
• On a scale of 1 “not confident” to 10 “highly confident”, how confident are you that you will reach your goal?
• Try it out!
• How did it feel?
Caregiver Helpbook


• Great workbook for caregivers

• Chapter 4 on communication

• http://allaboutdignity.com/powerful-tools-for-caregivers.php