

Coping With Caregiving

Life changes in a big way when you become a family caregiver. Your transition to a primary caregiving role may occur in a gradual way or be a sudden development. Whatever the timing or circumstances might be, your new responsibilities can seem overwhelming.

Caregiving support might be needed for one of your elder family members. You may be helping someone who has a chronic condition such as multiple sclerosis, cancer, Alzheimer's disease or other disability. Regardless, there are many things to think about as you begin to arrange care for your loved one. Then you face the ongoing challenge of balancing your caregiving role with that of family, work and other activities.

As a caregiver, you can choose to take charge of your life—your loved one's illness or disability doesn't always need to take center stage.

Improving Provider/Caregiver Communications

In caring for a loved one, sometimes you'll work with health care professionals such as physicians or specialists. Improving your communication with these providers can mean better care for the patient, less stress for the caregiver, and better use of everyone's time. Here are some ways to improve your communication with doctors:

- Prepare by writing your questions down in advance so you won't forget them.
- Be clear and concise about what you want to say to the doctor.
- Educate yourself about your loved one's disease or disability; there is a wealth of information available on the Internet about specific conditions.
- Recognize that not all questions have answers—especially those beginning with “why.”
- Separate any caregiving frustration or anger that you have from your feelings about the doctor. You are both on the same side.
- Seek the doctor's advice about other caregiving resources such as in-home care, community services, support groups, and help with paying for medications.
- Appreciate what the doctor is doing to help, and say thank you from time to time.

As a team member, parent, spouse or grandparent—as well as caregiver—you may often feel pulled in many different directions. It can be hard to do everything others want or need you to do. But by carefully managing your caregiving resources, while remembering to take care of yourself in the process, you can better manage the daily challenges of caregiving.

Go Online Today! Log on to www.FOH4YOU.com to access *The Caregiving Journey* and other helpful resources in the *Spotlight* section. Resources include self-assessment tools that can help you measure your level of stress and learn to control it better. Or, call the FOH Employee Assistance Program at 1-800-222-0364 or 1-888-262-7848 TTY users for support and resources.

Share this information with your family members and others involved in helping!