

Asking for help: A sign of strength, not weakness

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It's important to care for yourself. That's the message caregivers often hear— but it's easier said than done. The Family Caregiver's Alliance, www.caregiver.org, has some practical tips on how to ask for help:

- Make a list of things you could use help with. Friends or family members could then select an item that work bests for them.
- Ask assertively and simply. Avoid couching your request with words like “it would be nice if...” or “maybe you could...” Try something like, “I need to do some grocery shopping this week. Could you stay with Mom for a couple of hours while I’m out?”
- Go with a person’s strengths. If your daughter makes a great lasagne ask her to make one now and then to help with the cooking.
- Avoid relying exclusively on one person for help. Try to get support from a number of people to avoid relying too heavily on one person.
- Choose a good time to ask for help. Friends and family will appreciate your sensitivity to the events in their lives.
- Be aware that your request for help may not be accepted. It's the task that is being declined, not you. Don't be afraid to ask again another time.