

- Notice, acknowledge and appreciate the small things the person does to manage a difficult situation. Remember that support-providing is generally aimed at helping the person in becoming as self-reliant as possible over time and enhancing their functioning.

Self-care during caregiving process

Support is typically a reciprocal/two-way process. Although, most often we are givers as well as receivers of support in day-to-day life; at times, our care-giving role may become much more prominent when a loved one has a major /chronic difficulty (e.g. a physical or psychiatric condition that requires long term care). Being constantly involved in one's care-giving role at the expense of self-care/other roles in life can give rise to frustration, sense of burden and exhaustion in the care-giver.

- We need to remember that it is important to care for ourselves too. It is not about being selfish. It is about being responsible to ourselves and it restores our physical and emotional energy and helps us to be able to take care of our loved ones more effectively.

- So we need to find little spaces and moments – to take care of ourselves and recharge our own emotional batteries.
- It helps us to manage the care-giving stress when we 'value' what we are able to give.
- There are times we need to remember the limits of personal support. We need to be open to reach out for professional support as may be needed. Personal support and professional support are valuable in their own right and can complement each other.



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SUPPORTING OUR LOVED ONES: WHAT WORKS

Supporting others is one of the little ways in which we give back to the world. It is



something we do so often that we may at times underestimate its power. Although supporting is a very 'natural process' for most of us, most of the times; it is a science and an art.

Support can be of multiple kinds such as practical support, informational support etc. Emotional support involves listening to feelings, providing emotional comfort by 'being there' and boosting self respect and confidence.

The quality of support a person receives can help in providing a buffer against the impact of stress, can help enhance coping and boost one's self esteem. Supportive relationships influence mental as well as physical health in myriad ways.

Inappropriately given support can give rise to the following difficulties:

- May result in a sense of incompetence in the receiver or cause excessive dependency
- May result in dissatisfaction due to mismatch between what is needed/desired & what is offered
- May induce a sense of guilt in the receiver

Please remember:

HOW support is given and whether the person FEELS supported are very important issues and not just WHAT support is given.

Helpful ways of providing support

The nature of support that may be required differs from one situation to another. A few general guidelines are given below:

- Try to match the kind of support (practical, advise-based/informational or emotional) to the needs of the person at a given point of time.
- Several times in daily life, people 'know' what they have to do to tackle a situation. They may merely want someone - to 'listen' to them! So, at times 'being there' with the suffering person can be one of the highest forms of emotional, moral and spiritual support that one can give.
- Of course, do offer help in generating possible solutions to handle a situation when that is asked for/needed. Many a times, individuals may be more open to discuss ways of managing a situation once they feel that their feelings have been listened to.
- Avoid giving reassurance prematurely before understanding the perspective of the other person.



- Avoid giving false reassurance in a very difficult situation. Instead, you can acknowledge that the situation is difficult and uncertain but offer hope about being able to manage.
- Help individuals in mobilizing their own internal sources of strengths (for example, their spirituality, their coping ability as reflected in the past)
- In times of stress, especially acute crisis, help individuals in reducing the mental barriers they may have about mobilizing support from various sources around them.
- Try that your support does not make the person feel belittled or diminished. Remember, life is about give-and take. All of us need different kinds of support to varying extent.
- Sometimes when we are interacting with someone who has an illness, we end up overdoing things. Please allow the person to do something, whatever he/she can do at the given point of time- something meaningful that does not leave him/her at the receiving end. This is important for

