

Loren M. Gelberg-Goff

MSW, LCSW, CHt

Empowering Family Caregivers to Take Back Their Lives

How To Ask For Help – And Get It!

Practice the following steps to get good at asking for others' help with caring for your loved one - one of the first skills I teach in my *Take Back Your Life* program! Each step is necessary as you learn to allow yourself to experience more empowerment, contentment and joy in your life.

1. **Breathe....** Always the first step! Taking that *slow, deep breath* helps you move from reacting out of *habit* (guilt feelings) to responding in a *mindful and purposeful* way (respecting your needs and feelings). NOW you're ready to ask and answer clearly...
2. **What is My Desired Outcome?** This, of course, is the most important question (and my favorite!). It must be answered in terms of *what you want*, and it must be something *over which you have control*. So, even if you haven't felt like you have control over letting someone else step in to help your mother, *you do have control over whether or not you ask*. It's important to remember that if you don't ask, the answer is *always* "no."
3. **Challenge your beliefs.** If you believe it's *wrong* for you to ask for help, or that you will be *admitting failure* if you acknowledge that you *need* help...or that *people will judge you* for asking, CHALLENGE these beliefs. **Don't believe everything you think! Be skeptical.** Often other people want to help, but they need to be asked. If you've been handling everything for so long, everyone else is probably *assuming* their help is not needed! **Take the opportunity to let them feel valued.**
4. **Breathe through your discomfort.** *You will feel discomfort* at doing something different – that's a given. *You already feel discomfort* NOT asking for outside help...**now you get to choose** which discomfort you would rather experience.
5. **Start small.** Ask for help with something quick and easy to practice getting familiar with how asking for help or support – *and getting an immediate "Yes"* – actually feels!
6. **Use words that reflect how reasonable the request is.** "*Could you pick up mom's prescription on your way home today?*" - or "*Would you be able to stop at the grocery and get some milk and orange juice for mom?*" - will focus them on their ability and willingness to carry out the task. And even though you may catch yourself doing it at first, avoid adding the words "for me" to the request – *they are doing it for your mom, not for you!*

and we breathe

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Loren M. Gelberg-Goff, LCSW
200 Oak Ave
River Edge, NJ 07661

Loren@LorenGelbergGoff.com
www.LorenGelbergGoff.com
(201) 489-6720