



Communicating with the Doctor

And Other Health Care Professionals

Say What You Mean and Mean What You Say

Regardless whether you are a family or a professional caregiver, understanding the principles of clear communication will help you be a more effective caregiver and a better advocate for the person in your care. Why is there a critical need for better communication between health care professionals, home care companions, patients and family caregivers? Because good communication helps people clear up misunderstandings and confusion quickly, builds positive relationships and leads to better care. Most of all, good communication reduces stress for everyone. It helps create the possibility that your caregiving experience (both professional and family) will be a time of personal growth and satisfaction.

Steps to Effective Communication

To create a positive, productive relationship with healthcare providers, apply the following principles in a consistent, balanced way.

1. **Establish presence** Make eye contact with the people around you. Focus your attention and listen with your “heart” as well as your mind.
2. **Participate actively** To make your doctor’s visit more effective:



Be prepared—Think about your goals for your appointment.

Clearly state your purpose—Give the reason why you are seeking medical help.

Give relevant information—Focus on the most important information first.

Ask questions—Be certain you understand what is taking place, what your care recipient needs, and what you should be doing.

3. **Build Mutual Understanding** Building understanding and trust is a process. Practice the following and your ability to communicate will grow stronger.

Active listening—Really listen and don’t tune out if you disagree.

Ask for clarification—Try to understand the meaning that the speaker intends.

Ask questions—Check your understanding by saying “The part that isn’t clear to me is...”

Demonstrate Understanding—Use phrases such as “So what you are saying is...”

Avoid Assumptions—Ask questions until you are sure of what is being said. Say “If I understand you right, you mean...”

4. **Encourage collaboration** Work actively as part of a team.

Focus on common goals—Agree on the actions that need to be taken to achieve those goals.

Clarify responsibilities—Be clear on who is responsible for what. Make sure that the people involved can do what they are responsible for. If needed, get extra help along the way with a particular task.

Speak openly and honestly—Explain how you and the person in your care are responding emotionally to the treatment plan.

Asking the Right Questions About Your Medications

Keep a list of your medications and doses readily available in your purse or wallet.



Whether you're taking a prescription drug or one you buy over-the-counter, don't hesitate to ask your doctor or pharmacist questions.

- **What's the name of the medication?**
Learn both the generic and brand names.
- **Why are you taking it?**
Knowing why your doctor has recommended a particular medication

increases the chances that you will take the medication appropriately and receive the intended benefit.

- **What effect can you expect?**
How will the drug make you feel? How soon can you expect results? Some drugs take days or weeks to have an effect.
- **How much, when and how long should you take it?**
Make sure the directions make sense. “Four times daily” could mean with each meal and at bedtime or every six hours, including the middle of the night.
- **Are there restrictions?**
Some foods can interfere with the effectiveness of a drug. Alcohol also can interfere and cause certain side effects. In addition, some drugs can make you sensitive to sunlight.
- **What are the side effects?**
What are common side effects? Which side effects may go away with time? Which side effects should prompt you to contact your doctor?
- **What do you do if you miss a dose?**
Do you take it as soon as you remember or wait until the next dose is due?
- **Are there alternatives?**
Do other drugs or treatments cost less or have fewer side effects? Will a generic drug provide the same benefit?

- **Feel Good About Yourself – Change your perspective.** Do long waits in doctors' offices frustrate you? Consider that waiting room time can actually be a break from the usual routine. One way to make the time more enjoyable is to bring along new hobby such as knitting or an absorbing novel. Once you get interested in a book or a hobby, you'll look to the brief mental break while waiting.

Communicating When Giving Care...It's Not As Hard As You Think! When you talk to the person you are assisting, do they understand you? And do you understand them? No matter how hard it is to communicate, don't give up hope. A few simple techniques can help.

HARD OF HEARING

Loss of hearing can make people seem slow or not interested. Often, however, they simply can't hear what others are saying. They may not have their hearing aid turned up. To make sure *you* can be heard:

- Stand, sit, or squat** so you are at eye level with the person.
- Make sure your face is in the light** so that your lips and facial expressions can be seen.
- Use simple sentences.** For example, "Do you want to eat?"
- Use body language** such as nodding or pointing and lots of facial expressions.
- Speak in a normal tone**, facing the person, and making eye contact. Do not shout.

UNDERSTANDING STROKE

People who have had a stroke can lose the ability to speak or to understand others. Often, however, their ability to think stays the same as before the stroke--even though their behavior may have changed:

- At times they can say words and at other times they can't. Or they may repeat the same word over and over.
- They may swear, laugh, or cry without realizing it.
- They may have trouble listening, speaking, reading, and writing. They may understand what you say but now are unable to speak clearly or to be understood by you. Their speech may be mixed-up and make no sense.
- They may not be able to control their behavior or facial expressions.

UNDERSTANDING ALZHEIMER'S

Learning how to communicate with someone with Alzheimer's/dementia is very important. These people have their own reality so **do not try to reason with them.** If *you* always remain calm, you can keep them calm, too. The most important thing to remember is **respond to their emotions – not to their behavior.** To improve your chances of being understood:

- Reduce background noise.** (Loud noises can actually cause *pain* to someone with Alzheimer's.)
- Establish eye contact.** If the person is standing, stand; if the person is sitting, sit or squat down.
- Address the person by name** and remind him or her of your name.
- Explain what you are going to do** before you do it using one-step commands. Point to the object you are discussing.

For example, say, "Do you want your slippers?" not "Do you want these?"

-Avoid expressions that may cause confusion. Don't say, "Jump into bed." Instead, say, "Get into bed."

A CALM ATMOSPHERE

People with Alzheimer's do best when they are in a calm place. Television programs should be quiet and non-violent, only caffeine-free beverages should be served, and family arguments should be avoided. To maintain a calm atmosphere--

- Develop a consistent routine** of care or assistance.
- Be sensitive to changing moods** and do not take them personally.
- Use humor.**
- Give a backrub**, if appropriate.
- Do not argue**, enter their reality and give them reassurance and comfort and agree with their statements.

PRACTICING SELF-CARE

The stress of taking care of someone overtime can cause caregiver burnout. You can control your emotions by releasing anger and frustration in a safe way.



- Take a walk to cool down, preferably in nature.
- When home alone, smack a rolled towel against a solid wall.
- Go to a private corner and unleash your anger on a big pillow.
- Spend 15 minutes in meditation or deep breathing
- Share your feelings with a trusted friend.
- Practice daily gratitude.



BBQ Corn on the Cobb Recipe

Ingredients:

- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- 1/8 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1 pinch onion powder
- Garlic powder to taste
- 1/2 cup butter, softened
- 6 ears corn, husked and cleaned

Directions:

Step 1: Preheat grill for medium-high heat

Step 2: In a medium bowl, mix together the chili powder, oregano, onion powder, cayenne pepper, garlic powder, salt, and pepper. Blend in the softened butter. Apply this mixture to each ear of corn, and place each ear onto a piece of aluminum foil big enough to wrap the corn. Wrap like a burrito, and twist the ends to close.

Step 3: Place wrapped corn on the preheated grill, and cook 20 to 30 minutes, until tender when poked with a fork. Turn corn occasionally during cooking.

Step 4: Enjoy as a snack or with your entrée as the healthy carbohydrate. Be sure to include other vegetables and protein for balanced meal!

CAREGIVER UNIVERSITY

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WORKSHOPS

Free Upcoming Caregiver Workshops

Matter of Balance: Managing Concerns about Falls series in SPANISH *presented by Maria Quiroz, Family Consultant CRC & Santa Cruz Volunteer Center*

8 week series, every THURSDAY from 8/1/2019-9/19/2019

9:30 am– 11:30 am, Watsonville Senior Center 115 E. Fifth St. Watsonville, CA

Many older adults experience concerns about falling and restrict their activities. A Matter of Balance is an award-winning program designed to manage falls and increase activity levels. (Must attend all 8 classes, space is limited)

Powerful Tools for Caregivers (Telehealth) *presented by Siing McBroom, Clinical Supervisor Program Mgr., MSW and Christina Andrade, Sr. Family Consultant CRC*

6 week series, every THURSDAY 9/5/2019-10/10/2019

1:30 pm-3:30 pm ONLINE (Must attend all 6 classes, space is limited)

Powerful Tools for Caregivers is an educational program designed to help family caregivers take care of themselves while caring for a relative or friend. You will benefit from this class whether you are helping a parent, spouse, friend, someone who lives at home, in a nursing home, or across the country.

Caregiver University Conference: Dealing with Dementia series

Dealing with Dementia is an educational program designed to help family caregivers of people living with dementia, developed by the Rosalynn Carter Institute for Caregiving (space is limited)

Hollister—Save the Date!

Saturday, October 12th 2019 12:30 pm-6:00 pm

Hollister Community Center, 300 West Street, Hollister CA

Presented by Del Mar Caregiver Resource Center in partnership with Jovenes de Antano and CareMore

Monterey— Save the Date!

Saturday, November 9th 2019 9:00 am– 3:00 pm

Carmel Foundation, The Southeast Corner of 8th and Lincoln Avenue, Carmel CA

Presented by Del Mar Caregiver Resource Center in partnership with The Carmel Foundation

To register:

800-624-8304 or www.delmarcaregiver.org

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Caregiver Support Groups

Sponsored by Del Mar Caregiver Resource Center

Caring for a Spouse or Life Partner Caregiver Support Group

When: Second Tuesday of every month, 1:30 - 3:00 pm

Where: 1537 Pacific Avenue, Suite 300, Santa Cruz

Facilitator: Jessica Mattila, Family Consultant

For information call (831) 459-6639

Caregiver Support & Education Group - In Spanish

When: Second Monday of every month, 5:30 -7:30 pm

Where: Quadrangle Building, 1000 South Main Street, Room 302, Salinas

Facilitator: Maria Quiroz, Family Consultant

Sponsors: Del Mar CRC

For information call (831) 424-4359

Parkinson's Support Group

When: Second Friday of each month, 1:30 - 3:30 p.m.

Where: Hollister Community Center, 300 West Street, Hollister

Facilitator: Christina Andrade, Senior Family Consultant

Sponsors: Del Mar CRC, Jovenes de Antaño

For information call (831) 975-5841

Memory Impairment Caregivers Support Group

When: First Wednesday of each month, 6:00-7:30 pm

Where: Hollister Community Center 300 West Street, Hollister

Facilitator: Christina Andrade, Senior Family Consultant

Sponsors: Del Mar CRC, Jovenes de Antaño

For information call (831) 975-5841

Walk and Talk Caregiver Support Group

NEW

When: First and Third Tuesdays of each month, 10:15 -11:30 am

Where: Rio Del Mar Beach (parking lot)

Facilitator: Dee Edwards

Sponsors: Del Mar CRC

For information, call Dee at (408) 712-1400 or (831) 459-6639



Can't attend a support group in person? Try a Telephone Support Group (no phone charge) for free. For more information call the Alzheimer's Association's office at 800-272-3900

Additional support groups:

Alzheimer's Association - 800-272-3900

Cabrillo College Stroke & Disability

Learning Center: Santa Cruz - (831)425-0622

Central Coast Center for Independent

Living: Monterey, San Benito, Santa Cruz - (831) 462-8720

Community Hospital of the Monterey

Peninsula: Monterey - (831) 625-4606

Dominican Hospital: Santa Cruz - (831) 462-7700

Jovenes de Antaño: San Benito - (831) 637-9275

First United Methodist Church: Watsonville (831) 662-3170

Twin Lakes Church: Aptos - 831) 465 3368



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Tips for Healthy Exercising

The following tips may help you increase your chances for continuing your exercise schedule:

- Select an activity you enjoy and can easily do (gardening, walking, tai chi, yoga, dancing, etc)
- Wait 1 ½ to 2 hours after eating to exercise
- Wear clothing that allows your body to breathe
- Listen to your body - begin slowly
- Make small changes to increase physical activity every day
 - Start with 15 minutes increments 2x per day
- Pair up with a friend, partner, or group to keep yourself motivated and accountable
- Have fun improving and maintaining your health – and taking care of you!

Seek the advice of your physician and/or a qualified instructor for specific goals, such as cardiac strengthening.