



Wheeler

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE
PROGRAM (EAP)

Care for an Elderly Loved One: Communicating Effectively with the Elderly (3 min read)



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As a person grows older, they experience changes in hearing, sight, and cognitive ability. These changes can often make it difficult for the caregiver to communicate and engage with the elderly person. Below is a list of some common health impairments, as well as some helpful tips and techniques that can help build a better and stronger caring environment.

Hearing Problems

It may be possible that the elderly person is losing their hearing. He or she may be consistently asking you “What?” or not answering you at all. If this is the case, it is important for the elderly to be checked and for you to learn new ways of dealing their hearing loss. Below are some tips that will help you through this process:

- Ask the elder to get a professional hearing test.
- Take the person to get a hearing aid fitted.
- Find a suitable, quiet environment to speak to the person in.

- Sit in front of the elder and speak clearly, loudly, and slowly.

Vision Problems

Medical issues may affect the elder's eyesight. This can loss can greatly impact their ability to function independently in many aspects of their lives. Additionally, this will be a taxing situation on their emotional health, leaving them feeling irritated or moody.

Below are some tips on how you can approach this situation as the caregiver and help and elder cope with their vision problems:

- Help him or her obtain glasses with the correct prescription.
- Get large-print books and other large-print materials. Consider getting books-on-tape for the person instead.
- Keep magnifying glasses and reading glasses available in easy-to-find places.
- Make sure the person has proper lighting.
- Help the person read when necessary. Read directions, signs, and other important information.
- Talk to the elder's doctor about the impaired eyesight.

Cognitive Problems

Various medical conditions, like strokes, Alzheimer's disease, and Dementia can affect an elder's ability to function on a daily basis. Seemingly simple activities may not be so simple for the person suffering with cognitive impairment. In additions, their regressing mental state can also be very challenging for the caregiver. Below are some tips that will you and the elder adjust and accommodate their changing abilities:

- Understanding how the condition affects the elderly person and the best ways to care for the person with that condition
- Being patient, comforting, reassuring, and compassionate
- Writing things down
- Using simple and clear language
- Not expressing anger and frustration toward the impaired individual

Emotional Problems

If you or the elderly individual feels angry, resentful, depressed, or irritated, this may inhibit healthy communication and relationships. Below are some tips to help communicate better when emotional problems are involved:

- Seek professional help and find a support group.
- Don't try to ignore the emotions. Find healthy ways to deal with them.
- Talk to trusted people about problems and encourage the elderly person to talk about emotions.
- Don't make important decisions when upset. Wait for a time when you are feeling calm.
- Inquire with a health professional about medications that may help.

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