

CAREGIVER CONNECTION

August 2026 Edition
Assert Yourself & Ask For Help!
Reprinted from Trualta

Assertive communication is an important skill in caregiving. It can help you:

- » Become more comfortable asking for help and saying no
- » Express your needs
- » Reduce stress
- » Increase self-esteem
- » Gain respect from others

An important part of assertive communication is mutual respect, which allows you to express your feelings, thoughts, and beliefs clearly and directly while also respecting others. This is more likely to result in effective communication that addresses both of your needs. Other types of communication, like passiveness or aggressiveness, don't involve mutual respect and are less effective. Check out the examples of types of communication and what they can look like:

Passive Communication	Aggressive Communication	Assertive Communication
Expressing yourself in an apologetic way	Expressing yourself inappropriately	Clear messages
Not sharing what you really think	May be seen as attacking or explosive	Firm and direct
Not respecting your own thoughts	Not respecting others' thoughts	Sharing your own thoughts and respecting others' thoughts

Assertive Communication Techniques

Here are simple and effective techniques to help you communicate more assertively.

Technique	What It Does	Example
"I" statements	Helps you tell the other person how you feel without placing blame while taking responsibility for your own feelings.	Instead Of: "You never help out with dinner." Try This: "I feel frustrated when I have to prepare dinner on my own every night because I have other responsibilities."
State facts (not judgments)	Judgments can take away from your message and can be hurtful to the other person. Stating facts helps address the problem.	Instead Of: "You're making the bathroom an unsafe place for grandpa." Try This: "It's dangerous to leave the bathroom cupboards unlocked because there are strong medications that grandpa could misuse if he gets confused."
Avoid "should" statements	"Should" statements are a form of judgment and place blame on the other person rather than finding solutions.	Instead Of: "I'm very busy today. You should really help me with tonight's dinner." Try This: "I'd really appreciate help with tonight's dinner because I also have to pick up the dry-cleaning this afternoon."

Technique	What It Does	Example
Show empathy	Assertive communication requires respect for others. Using empathy can also help your message be received better, as you've shown you understand the other person's experience.	Instead Of: "The respite application is due in two days! Why haven't you finished it?" Try This: "I understand that you're having difficulty completing the application form for respite services, but it's due in two days. Would you like to call me to discuss the areas you are having difficulty with?"
Use an assertive tone	It's not just about what you say but about how you say it! Your volume can affect how your message is received.	Use a firm and relaxed voice and match the volume to the situation. Try not to be too loud or too quiet.
Use assertive body language	Body language communicates how you feel about what you're saying and can impact how the other person receives your message.	Try to: » Face the person directly » Stand or sit up straight » Make eye contact

How To Say "No" Assertively

You may worry that saying "no" means you're not being a good caregiver or that you'll hurt someone's feelings. Remember that learning how to say "no" is an important way to respect your own limits, prevent burnout, and reduce stress.

Reframe It! If you struggle with saying no, think about it this way: saying "no" is simply declining a request. It does not mean you're rejecting the person making the request.

Check out some examples of different ways to say "no" below. Regardless of which strategy you choose, try to keep it straightforward, brief, and polite.

- » Redirecting involves acknowledging the person's request before saying no. For example: "I know you want to talk to me about organizing mom's birthday party, but I can't make it today".
- » Reasoning involves giving a short, unapologetic reason for why you're saying no. For example: "I can't make it today because I have to bake cookies for the school bake sale tomorrow".
- » Postponing involves declining the request in the current moment but leaving room to say yes in the future. Only use it if you genuinely want to say yes. For example: "I can't meet with you today, but I can meet with you on Friday".

- » Inquiring involves declining the current request but finding another request you can say yes to. For example: “That venue is out of my budget. Are there any other venues you like for Mom’s birthday party?”
- » Repeating involves simply repeating the word “no” over and over again if someone is making persistent requests. You do not need to give any explanation.

Using Assertive Communication To Ask For Help

Asking for help is not a sign of weakness—it’s a sign of strength that says, “I value myself and I value your help”. Here are some examples of assertive ways to ask for help:

Use Assertive Communication Techniques

For example: “I’ve been feeling stressed about getting all of Mom’s errands done throughout the week. I understand that you’re busy, but I need help. How can we make this work?”

Ask For Help With Specific Tasks

Instead of asking someone to simply help out once in a while, tell them exactly what you need help with. Try saying something like, “Could you pick up mom’s medications from the pharmacy this weekend?”

You can also come up with a list of tasks you need help with, like laundry, errands, or visiting with your care recipient so that you can take care of yourself. That way, the next time someone says, “Let me know if there’s anything I can do to help”, you’ll have a whole list they could pick from!

Ask For Help On A Schedule

If you have friends or family who help out every once in a while, ask them if they’d be willing to create a schedule of when they’re able to help. Agreeing on a schedule or routine helps you know when to expect help from others, which can support you in planning your to-do list or scheduling self-care time.

Assertiveness Requires Practice

Assertive communication is a valuable skill to have. However, just like any other skill, it requires practice! Don’t be discouraged if you don’t get it exactly right on your first try

Upcoming Caregiver Events

Caregiver Education

August 20 1 PM to 2:30 PM Common Scams and Fraud

September 17 1 PM to 2:30 PM Oh, My Aching Back! Learn to Transfer Safely and Other Hands on Skills

Location: DASH Center 515 Quincy St., Onalaska, WI

Please register by calling 608-785-5700



adrc@lacrossecounty.org
608-785-5700
www.lacrossecounty.org/ADRC

Kristine Meyer
Caregiver Support Specialist

Family Caregiver Support Group

August 13 and September 10 1:30 PM to 2:30 PM

Location: Franciscan Spirituality Center 920 Market St La Crosse, WI

No registration needed

Caregiver Cruise on the La Crosse Queen

September 19 1:30 PM to 3:00 PM

La Crosse Queen Riverboat

Riverside Park 405 Veterans Memorial Drive La Crosse, WI 54601

Must register by calling 608-785-5700

Caring Better and Braver

October 24 9:30 AM to 3:30 PM

Where: La Crosse Medical Health Science Consortium

1300 Badger St

La Crosse, WI 54601

What to Expect:

Vendor Fair 9:00 AM to 11:00

Morning Breakout Sessions:

- For the working caregiver: Using FMLA for Caregiving Activities
- For the caregiver who is considering long term care: The State of Wisconsin's Ombudsman Program
- For the stressed out caregiver: Stress Reduction

Free Lunch and the opportunity to socialize with other caregivers

In the afternoon, we will be showing the documentary, "Caregiver". This documentary was produced by Bradley Cooper after he took time off from his acting career to care for his father.

Watch for more details coming soon! Registration will open September 15, 2026.

Laughter is the Best Medicine!

"If caregiving was an Olympic sport, I'd have a gold medal in 'keeping calm'."

Staying calm becomes second nature – even if it's tough.

"Sometimes I think, 'What did I do to deserve this?' And then I laugh – and keep going."

You might question it, but you keep showing up every day.



School of Nursing
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

Caregivers Needed for Study

Please help us at 2 meetings!

We are creating a survey to measure and improve the confidence of caregivers when talking about pain with clinicians on behalf of an older family member. We want to learn which parts of pain are most important to caregivers when helping older adults discuss their pain experience and treatment needs.



We are looking for caregivers who:

- Are 18 years and older
- Help a family member who is 65 or older and has pain
- Usually attend the clinic visit with their family members
- Are from a rural community
- Can join two online meetings for 90 minutes

What will meetings involve?

- We will ask if questions are easy to understand and relevant to your experience as a caregiver.
- You may suggest changes to improve the wording or content of the questions.
- Your feedback will help improve the survey to better reflect real caregiver experiences.
- \$75 incentives will be given to each participant for each meeting.

Please contact either of us:

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Betty Chewning (Professor, School of Pharmacy) at 608-239-9426

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Maichou Lor

Associate Professor, PhD, RN, FAAN



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Betty Chewning

Professor, PhD



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(608) 239-9426

The ADRC of La Crosse County is looking for individuals who would like to share their experiences with the regional legislators about topics related to seniors and caregiving. Please call to register for this event. Also, if you are unable to attend, but would like to write a letter, we would be happy to submit it on your behalf. Furthermore, position papers are available upon request.



**LEGISLATIVE
TOWN HALL**



**MONDAY
AUGUST 31
1:30-4:00 PM**

Black River Beach
Neighborhood Center
1433 Rose St
La Crosse, WI

Be an **aging advocate** and take part in a **community conversation** with regional legislators about key state budget priorities.

Share your stories and experiences related to key priorities such as:

- ✓ Investing in Aging and Disability Resource Centers
- ✓ Safeguarding Nutrition Supports
- ✓ Reducing Falls Among Older Adults
- ✓ Other local aging services initiatives



RSVP by calling:
608-785-5700