

STOP FEELING GUILTY WHEN ASKING FOR HELP

Dealing with big changes in life isn't easy. So it isn't strange that the diagnosis of an illness like ALS, and the fearful future that belongs with it, often lead to an emotional rollercoaster. Fear and avoidance can arise, especially with ALS patients and their loved ones who often feel guilty or even ashamed when they continuously have to keep asking others for help.

But think of this next time you feel worries and doubt creeping up on you: The family members of someone with ALS also live with the diagnosis. When things get worse over the course of the illness it often leaves them exhausted and dumbfounded. Without a solid supporting network it can sometimes feel unbearable to deal with the difficulties of ALS.

To remain physically and mentally healthy yourself during such a stressful time it isn't just smart to ask for help, but even necessary.

This is how you open up to help without feeling guilty

Tell your colleagues, people from your church, neighborhood and family about your situation. Practice accepting each offer of practical help. The people around you who really care about you, will gladly support you in these difficult times. They can do so with simple chores such as going grocery shopping, or stopping by the post office or dry cleaner's, to small chores around the house.

Look at it this way: by accepting help from your surroundings you let them know you appreciate their friendship and support. There will be plenty of opportunities to show your gratitude, and perhaps you'll be able to do something alike in return one day.

Practice makes perfect. When you need help, you can make a list with things that need to be done and the names of the people who offered to help you. Show that you'd like to make use of their offer by asking them something specific, such as:

- Can you pick up a prescription today?
- Can you come by Tuesday just to meet up for an hour or so?
- Do you have time this week to make some calls and help me find the best nursing home?

There are also convenient tools online which efficiently arrange the coordination of friends, neighbors, members of a community (such as a church) and other people who want to help the ALS patient or his/her family. Make it easier for your loved ones to remain in touch by inviting them over to your home. Have neighbors and family bring along photo albums to look through with the person with ALS. Have meals together. Encourage friends to read the favorite books of the person with ALS. This helps to create a feeling of connection, liveliness and compassion in your home. It's encouraging to know you're not the only one who has to deal with the big and small changes that unavoidably come with ALS.

Read more

The book Living with ALS

<http://alsliga.be/nl/bibliotheek-ALS-Liga>

The book Share the Care

<http://www.alsa.org/als-care/resources/books/share-the-care.html>

Tips for loved ones to make time for themselves:

<http://www.alsa.org/als-care/resources/publications-videos/factsheets/fyi-respite.html>

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