



Employee NEWSLETTER

Employee Assistance Program
September 2018

Communicating Effectively with the Elderly

By Dr. Delvina Miremadi

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 elder to be checked out, and for you to learn new ways of dealing 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 in which to speak.
- Sit in front of the elder and speak clearly, loudly, and slowly.

Vision Problems

Medical issues may affect the elder's eyesight. This loss can greatly impact the ability to function independently in many aspects. Additionally, this will be a taxing situation on emotional

health, leaving the person feeling irritated or moody. Below are some tips on how you can approach this situation as the caregiver and help an elder cope with vision problems:

- Help him or her obtain glasses with the correct prescription.
- Get large-print books and other large-print materials. Consider getting audio books 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 addition, the person's regressing mental state can also be very challenging for the caregiver. Below are some tips that will help you and the elder adjust and accommodate changing abilities:

- Understand how the condition affects the elderly person and the best ways to care for the person with that condition.
- Be patient, comforting, reassuring, and compassionate.
- Write things down.
- Use simple and clear language.
- Don't express anger and frustration toward the impaired individual.

Continued on the next page.

First Choice Health™

Healthy Employees. Healthy Companies.™

(800) 777-4114



www.FirstChoiceEAP.com



Your EAP service is free, confidential and available 24/7 to help you balance your work, family, and personal life.

Continued from the previous page.

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.

Visit the EAP website at www.firstchoiceeap.com for more information and resources to help you support an elder in your life. You can also call the EAP 24/7 at (800) 777-4114 and speak with a counselor or research specialist for assistance on an elder's behalf.

