



## **Goodbye to Going It Alone: Learning to Ask for Help**

How many of us have learned that being independent, being able to do things for ourselves is strength, a sign of character and something that we should strive towards? In actuality, true independence is the ability to also recognize our feelings, needs, struggles, and to have the courage and character to ask for what we need.

### **How do you know when you need help?**

- Look to your feelings. Taking your emotional temperature will help you identify if you need help. What are you feeling now? Are you tired, sad, lonely, frustrated, or worried?
- Have you noticed physical changes related to your feelings? Has your sleep changed? Do you have more headaches?
- Have you noticed behavior changes? Have you become more short-tempered or forgetful?

### **Practice paying attention to your feelings**

- Make a list or find a list of potential feelings.
- Notice and name the feelings as they arise.
- Consider tracking how you are feeling in a journal.
- Observe your feelings with curiosity.
- Explore what your feelings are trying to tell you.
- Let go – attempting to ignore or resist a feeling may make it hurt more.
- As you accept the feeling/emotion, it will pass naturally.

### **How do you ask for help? What are barriers that keep you from seeking help?**

- Thoughts or beliefs: The belief that you are weak if you need help or concern about burdening others.



- Emotional barriers: Feeling fear or embarrassment in needing help.
- Expectations: Believing it is expected that you can do everything on your own.

### **Strategies to overcome barriers**

- Challenge negative beliefs or self-talk: “I deserve to get support.”
- Own your decisions: “It is my choice to sacrifice. It is my responsibility to ask for what I need.”
- Don’t expect... Ask! Others can’t read your mind. Ask for what you need.

### **Who do I ask for help?**

- Brainstorm a list of names and contact information. Keep your list handy, keep adding to it, and use it as a reminder that help is available. Options to consider include: family members, friends, neighbors, activity groups, community agencies, churches or religious supports, support lines, VA or medical providers.

### **How do I ask for help?**

- Be clear and be specific.
- Ask by giving the person a way to decline: “I know you are busy and may not be able to help but I am looking for a ride to the doctor’s office next week. I certainly understand if you aren’t able.”
- Share your general situation: “I have been really struggling to keep up with all the household chores, taking care of my husband and myself and I am calling family and friends to see if over the next couple of weeks I could get some help with chores, grocery shopping, or help in the yard. If you could give it some thought and let me know if you are to help, that would be great. Any help is really appreciated. I know everyone is busy so I understand if you don’t have time.
- Be open and look for how people are able to help: Someone may not be able to help with your exact request, but maybe they could help in another way.