



## **Choosing Your Words: Harnessing the Power of Communication**

It is important for caregivers to learn the skills to give voice to your needs, concerns, and to advocate for yourself and your loved one through clear communication.

What keeps you from sending the clear messages you need to send?

- Stressed, overwhelmed, not focused on you, but on what is coming at you
- Feeling so strongly or so emotionally charged that your perspective is skewed
- You learned that it is selfish to advocate for your feelings and needs
- Lack confidence in your thinking
- Fear of risking of upsetting someone, or being vulnerable
- Have conflict within you and it is difficult to sort out clearly what you need

If you are not clear about what you are feeling, needing, or asking for, then it will be difficult for others to understand what you need.

### **Steps You May Choose to Take:**

- Start by becoming clear. Slow down and listen to yourself. Listen to what you feel and need.
- Find calm. Wait until you feel less stress and more in control of your emotions so that you don't react and communicate in a manner that you will regret.
- Make "I" statements.
- Describe your observations. State what you see, hear, or notice, in specific terms without judgment. "I noticed\_\_\_", or "I observed\_\_\_."
- Share your feeling using a one-word description of the emotion, such as "I feel sad, scared, worried, or confused."
- Next, add the need that that you have. "I feel \_\_\_ because I need or want \_\_\_."
- Finally make a request that is clear, specific, and describes the positive action you want the person to take. "I feel \_\_\_ because I need \_\_\_. Would you be willing to \_\_\_?"

Taking any of these steps is going to move your communication in a positive direction. If you are harnessing the power of direct communication, you will experience the gifts that come when your words are clear, honest, and from the heart. Authentic communication will empower you and improve your connection to others. Choose your words and let the world know who you are.

**We are here to listen.**

VA Caregiver Support Line 1-855-260-3274