



Gift of Life Family House Caregiver Lifeline Program

Keeping your Relationship with the Patient Healthy

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It is important to have a plan for keeping your relationship with the person receiving care healthy. Most likely you decided to be their caregiver because of the relationship you had with the patient prior to becoming their caregiver. For instance you fell in love with your spouse before you decided to be their transplant caregiver, or he/she was your child before you were his/her transplant caregiver. It is essential to try to maintain that relationship you had before becoming their caregiver, and there are a few steps that can help you do that.

1. *Identify what you can and can't do for the patient*
2. *Identify what caregiving responsibilities cause you distress*

You may not be able to be a caregiver 24 hours a day due to other responsibilities, don't forget those other responsibilities, and let the transplant patient know that during those times you are unable to provide care. When you are able to determine what specific times you can and can't provide care, it will set up boundaries which can help you avoid becoming overwhelmed. Similarly there may be some caregiving responsibilities that are distressing to you. Determining what those are and asking for help to provide that care can be very helpful. When you are doing something for someone you love and you are distressed by the task, you may become resentful or stressed due to caregiving.

3. *Make a careplan*

This may seem time consuming. A care plan is somewhat like a journal that documents your daily tasks and appointments. You can do it as frequently (daily) or infrequently (monthly) as there is a need. A careplan will help you organize your days and allow you to see what days/weeks you will need help and what days you have more free time for yourself.

4. *Take time for yourself*
5. *Take time together*

It is important for any caregiver to take time for themselves so they don't forget what makes them happy. It is also important to take time with the patient unrelated to caregiving. If it's your spouse have a date night every so often, or make a play date with your child. You don't want to forget why you love yourself and why you love the patient.

6. *Ask for help*

Sometimes we need help from others, like family, friends, social worker, or the transplant team. Don't be afraid to ask for help, sometimes we cannot do everything on our own. If you try to do everything alone you could become fatigued, burnt-out, stressed, or depressed, which could cause resentment towards the patient. There is a transplant social worker to assist with tough issues related to the transplant process. Respite care for time off is an option, an aide or in-home nurse is also an option, even individual, family, or couples counseling may be helpful. There are many resources available so you don't have to feel alone and you can feel happy being a caregiver for your loved one.