

Caregiver Discussions Guide

Practical language for the conversations caregiving brings

Taking on the role of caregiver can happen overnight, and it rarely comes with a script. Communicating openly can make everyday life a little easier, whether you're asking for flexibility at work, requesting more support at home or explaining what's going on to the people closest to you.

Each section focuses on one relationship, with points to keep in mind and an opening line to get you started.

Employer

- Ask for schedule flexibility or time off without overexplaining the medical situation
- Present research on policies, like the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), that may help
- Set realistic expectations for your availability
- Keep the conversation open in case your caregiving load changes

TRY OPENING WITH:

"I'm helping care for a family member with a serious health condition, and I'd like to talk about a schedule that lets me keep doing my job well."

Partner

- Ask for help with specific tasks rather than asking for help in general
- Name the invisible load (like tracking, scheduling and remembering) alongside the physical tasks
- Regularly revisit how you divide the work as things change

TRY OPENING WITH:

"I've been keeping track of a lot on my own. Can we sit down this week and figure out what you could take on?"

Adult sibling who splits care

- Propose concrete tasks for them to take off your plate
- Acknowledge their obstacles, like physical distance or different life stages
- Discuss concerns before resentment builds
- Set aside one-on-one time to listen to their worries, questions and challenges

TRY OPENING WITH:

"Can we find an hour this week, just us? I want to hear how you're handling all this and talk through how we can split up what needs to be done."

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Grandparents

- Give them one specific, useful way to help, rather than leaving them on the outside
- Set a boundary around advice shaped by a different generation's experience with medicine
- Acknowledge that their grief is their own

TRY OPENING WITH:

"I know this is hard on you, too. One thing that would really help is having you take Thursday school pickup."

Friends

- Replace "everything's fine" with something true
- Name one thing that would make a real difference
- Decide how much to share, and with whom

TRY OPENING WITH:

"Honestly, it's been a rough few weeks. Dropping off dinner one night this week would mean a lot."

Teachers and coaches

- Share only what affects the child's day at school or practice
- Request accommodations without full medical disclosure
- Name one point of contact for ongoing updates

TRY OPENING WITH:

"My child has a health condition that can affect their energy. Short breaks make a big difference, and I'm your best contact for any questions."

Your loved one

- Ask about their preferences directly instead of assuming
- Work through disagreements about how much help they want
- Raise decisions before they become urgent
- Check in on how it feels to be cared for, beyond what they need

TRY OPENING WITH:

"I want to make sure I'm helping the way you want me to. What's working, and what would you change?"



As your loved one's needs change, so will the conversations ahead

Return to this guide whenever your situation shifts, and find more caregiving resources on Caregiver Compass.

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