

PRACTICAL TIPS FOR WORKING WITH THE ELDERLY

Basic Overview

- The greatest gift that you will ever give the person you visit is your presence. This tells them that you care about them and that spending time with them is something you want and like to do.
- If you feel comfortable, be generous with your touch--it may be the only touch that person will receive that day
- Actively listen and be empathetic; share yourself--describe your world to your care receiver.
- Allow them to handle just as much as they can without interference. Do not rush in to do it for them; everyone needs the feeling of accomplishment.
- You do not need to have all of the answers, so feel secure in saying, "I don't know", "I'm not sure", or "I'll have to find out". Do not hesitate to call the office should you need assistance with this.
- Never become involved beyond your capabilities...both physically and/or emotionally.
- Many elderly and disabled individuals have health-related issues; therefore, one should check with the client to see if there are any dietary concerns prior to providing sweets, soda, etc.
- Always allow enough time. Because our clients are frail, elderly and disabled, many require additional time to navigate themselves. Weather conditions can also affect the duration of time.
- Once you give your telephone number out, you cannot take it back. *The CareGivers, Inc. strongly suggests that you do not give out your phone number* (pressing *67 will block your number from being displayed on "caller ID" units). If you do feel inclined to provide this information, it may be a good idea to wait several months before doing so. This gives you enough time to determine whether the person you are visiting would abuse this information.

For the Visually Impaired

- Offer the person your arm, as you would be ushered.
- Identify steps/obstacles in the path.
- Avoid glare, poorly lighted areas.
- Communicate your willingness to help.

For the Hearing Impaired

- Face the person to speak.
- Lower the pitch of your voice.
- Speak clearly and at a moderate rate. Do not over-articulate.
- Watch the expressions of the listener's face and note when the words are not caught.
- If the person has one good ear, sit closer to that ear.
- If necessary, take along a note pad to use in order to help you communicate.

For the Mobility Impaired

- Move slowly and deliberately, asking how you can assist.
- Ask how you can best assist them getting in and out of a chair or the car.
- Avoid sudden changes in motion or direction.
- Communicate your willingness to help.

For the Breathing Impaired

- Limit physical activity – climbing steps, walking far.
- Avoid open windows, fumes, smoking.