

## **Seven Steps to Getting the Help You Need\***

1. Recognize that caregiving, like all jobs, is made up of lots of individual tasks, not all of which are equally important.
2. Understand that asking for help is a sign of strength and not of weakness.
3. List all of your caregiving related tasks that need to get done during a typical week.
4. Group your list into categories: personal care for your loved one; transportation; household chores; healthcare activities.
5. List your caregiving worries (for example, who will care for my loved one if I get sick? What will happen to my loved one if she falls when I'm not home?)
6. Show your list to a family member, good friend, the MS nurse, etc. to get further ideas and insights. The intent is first to get comfortable with the idea of talking about your need for assistance, and hopefully get some encouragement and good ideas in the process.
7. Finally, do it! Take a deep breath and actually ask someone to help with one of the tasks on your list, or ask for guidance in resolving your most persistent worry. Start with something small, but start!

If your request falls on deaf ears at first, try not to get discouraged. It sometimes takes perseverance. Just remember, the effort is worth it because the goal is better care for your loved one and yourself.

\*Adapted from US Family Caregivers Association (NFCA), *Defining the Help You Need*, 2003.

Miller D. Caring for the carers. *MS in Focus*. 2004, **3**:12-16.