



NATIONAL FAMILY CAREGIVERS ASSOCIATION

**800/896-3650**  
**[www.thefamilycaregiver.org](http://www.thefamilycaregiver.org)**

NFCA is the nation's leading constituency organization for family caregivers. NFCA educates, supports, empowers, and speaks up for the more than 50 million Americans who care for loved ones with a chronic illness or disability, no matter what their age or diagnosis.

NFCA is grateful to all the generous corporations and foundations that are partnering with us in support of NFC Month 2006.

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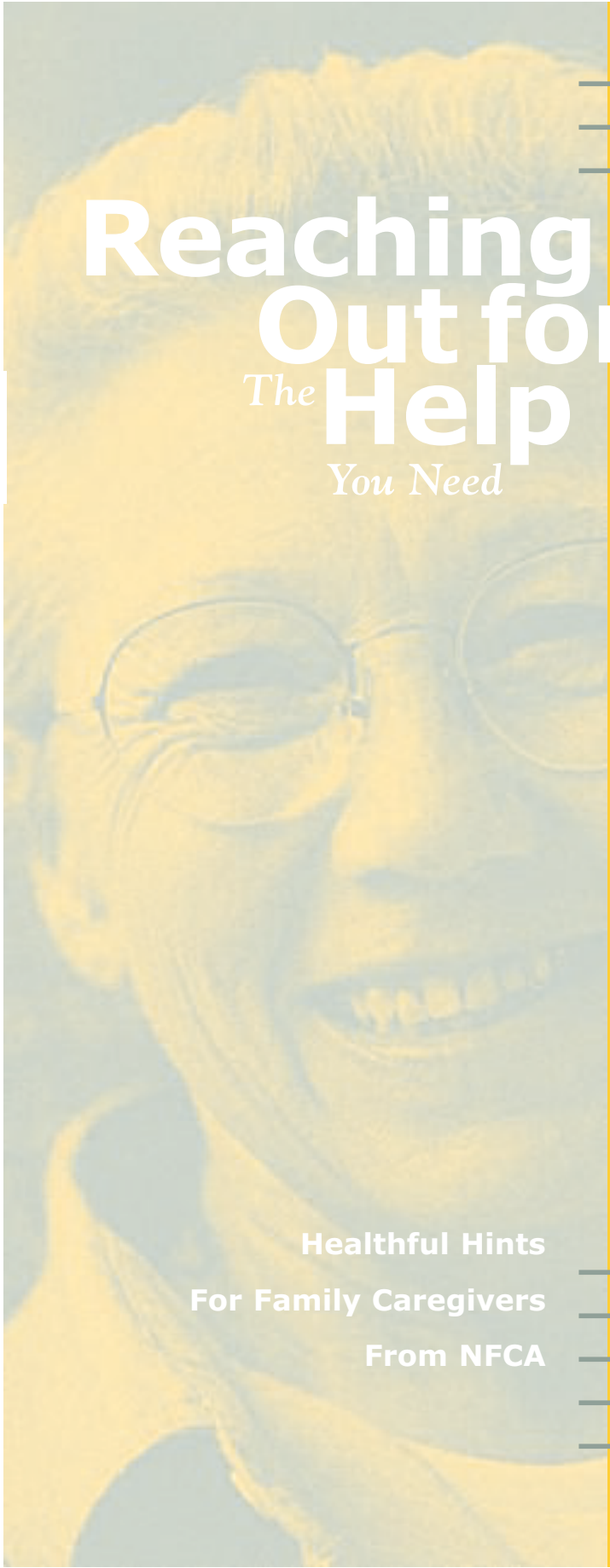
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A large, semi-transparent photograph of an elderly woman with short, wavy hair and glasses, smiling warmly. The image is overlaid with a yellow-to-white gradient bar on the right side. The text 'Reaching Out for The Help You Need' is printed in white over the top right portion of the image.

# Reaching Out for The Help You Need

**Healthful Hints**  
**For Family Caregivers**  
**From NFCA**

**Why is it so hard to ask for help?** What's a good response to the statement, "Call me if you need me?" Despite the fact that family caregivers are drowning in responsibility or are really confused about what the next step ought to be, they often respond "no thanks" when help is offered.

Asking for and accepting help is a complex issue. Obviously you first need to admit that having some help will make a real difference in your loved one's quality of life, and therefore yours as well. Then you need to define what help you need. Which tasks or chores would be the easiest to ask others to do? Which do you really want to do yourself? And which, if any, can you afford to pay others to do? If this just sounds like more work, know that it doesn't have to be an overwhelming task but rather just a way to organize the thoughts and information you already have. Ready to give it a try?

### Here are SIX STEPS to getting help...

#### 1. Recognize that caregiving, like any job, is made up of lots of individual tasks,

not all of which are of the same importance. Some tasks take a few minutes; some may take many hours. Some tasks are easy; others require some skill and fortitude. The challenge is to know the difference.

"The hardest part is fear, i.e., fear of refusal, fear of being misunderstood, or fear that I'll be considered whiny."

E. Dee Manies  
Overland Park, KS

#### 2. Recognize that asking for help is a sign of strength

and not of weakness. It means you truly have a grasp on your situation and have come up with a proactive

problem-solving approach to making things easier and better.

#### 3. Create a list of the tasks that need to get done in any given week,

or at least those you are most concerned about, such as balancing your responsibilities at work with taking mom to the doctor and Susie to soccer practice,

bathing and dressing your husband, cooking, cleaning, etc. When you see how long the list is you'll quickly understand why you are so tired and don't have time for yourself.

#### 4. Group your tasks into categories

such as personal care tasks for your loved one, transportation, household chores. You can group your tasks into only a few broad categories, or many specific ones. There's no right or wrong way. It's all a matter of personal preference.

#### 5. Write down your caregiving worries.

Where will we get the money to pay for John's medications? Who will care for Mary if I get sick?

Where can I find an adult day facility that provides transportation? Seeing them in black and white helps diffuse some of their emotion. It also allows you to think more rationally about your concerns and understand how getting help with some of your tasks might lessen the stress. It can provide the basis for deciding which tasks you might ask a neighbor, family member or the church to help out with, which you are willing and able to pay someone else to do, and which there might be a public program for.

#### 6. Share your lists with someone you trust

before you actually reach out for help—a friend, therapist, or clergyman, perhaps. The intent is to first get comfortable with the idea of talking about your need for assistance and hopefully get some encouragement and good ideas in the process. Then 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, especially if you are looking for hands-on assistance or something that requires someone doing you a favor. Don't get discouraged if you get rejected at first. It sometimes takes perseverance. Just remember—the effort is worth it because the goal is better care for your loved one and yourself.

"When people offer to help, be ready to give them a date and time when they are needed."

Dick Stone  
Oklahoma City, OK