



Summary of Chapter 5: Keeping the Team Going

In Chapter 5, we begin by noting that helping won't feel good all of the time for variety of reasons. There will be challenges to any group. These will be helped by: 1) setting a vision, 2) having ground rules, 3) supporting one another in asking for help, 4) appreciating each other's gifts and 5) playing together and saying thank you.

"People who have been part of team speak often, and with passion, about the rewards they experience: a sense of connection, a greater awareness of the gift and fragility of life, and new wisdom gained from working with others."

Here are some strategies to maintain the goodwill within your care share team.

- **Schedule regular check-in meetings.** This is the place where folks can speak of all the feelings that arise out of participation, find compassionate listeners, and adjust roles and responsibilities. Encourage members to share experiences, concerns and scheduling conflicts. It's normal to feel and discuss burnout, change or cutting back. You can reduce problems for one and all by discussing how to take a break, cut back or switch to less demanding roles.
- **Communicate.** Good communication begins with a team leader or designee who can take meeting notes, send them to everyone on the team, and use these notes as a tool for keeping everyone working together. Open, rather than selective, communication avoids the "left-out" feeling for some team members - and can be accomplished through group emails or phone trees. In our day of social media - a Facebook or web page, or an update through the Caring Bridge website of information may also be an encouraging, supportive and useful tool. When including the care-share member, viewing the communication can sometimes be uplifting - knowing others are there helping - consider it.
- **Honor your commitments.** If you offer to help another, you have someone relying upon you and your promises. You need to be clear in your own mind, and with others, how much and how often you can offer help - and stick to it! Sticking with tasks and schedules creates a safety net for care partners and the entire team. Don't bite off too much. Each person will have different amounts of time, skills and areas of expertise. What's important to remember is that all contributions matter!
- **Build Trust.** For those who are receiving help, aid or care, trusting people who have come together to help can be a challenge. This kind of relationship can be new: relying upon others in ways he or she never imagined can be hard. You who are providing assistance can build trust by being consistent in doing what you've promised, maintaining confidentiality, and remembering to focus on your care partner's needs.
- **Enter carefully into someone else's life.** It's an act of courage when your care partner opens her more personal, private life and needs, vulnerabilities and fears, hopes and dreams. Be careful, go slowly and honor this special circumstance.
- **Take care of yourself.** When you help someone, even though you might be glad to do so, the effort can be demanding, especially if the commitment is long-term or there is no apparent improvement. Don't be surprised to be emotionally drained. We cannot give what we do not have - which means it's okay to experiment and figure out how to recharge your own batteries. Go for a walk, see a raucous concert, take time for your children - nourish yourself.
- ~~**Respect boundaries and roles.** When there are specified and agreed upon roles with appropriate behaviors it is easier on everyone.~~
- **Play and rejuvenate.** Sometimes care givers come from different parts of a person's life and they may not know each other well. Serving together may create an opportunity to get to know others who have similar values and goals and provide benefits you did not expect. Additionally, when the group can get together, look to celebrate and have some fun. While we stress taking care of yourself, we also see the need for the group to find common ways to build its own identity.
- **Keep rituals and traditions.** Welcoming someone new onto the team, opening or closing meetings with a special saying or certain prayer, periodic celebrations, collecting items for a group scrapbook, writing group thank you notes, burning old papers that don't hold fond memories, keeping charts, creating a collage, sharing food, posting onto Facebook



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