



ACCESS & ADVOCATE:

Consider your own support network

Relationships that are truly supportive may be two-way streets or, in some cases, you may be giver or the recipient of help or advice. Family members or friends may have expectations for you, or you of them, regarding how they can help and what, if anything, they may expect in return. Think about a recent problem, challenge, or need you may have faced. It can be anything from watching your dog while you go away for the weekend, to driving you to a doctor's appointment, to loaning you money to replace your laptop computer. Different challenges require different solutions, and a different give-and-take in relationships. Try responding to these:

- Make a list of the family members and friends you can count on if you need help.
- How and when can they help you? Next to each name, make some notes about their situations, and what and when you might ask for. Different needs may require different types of support from your network; not everyone may be right for each situation.
- Which family members or friends might ask for or need something in return? What might you think to do for them? Would you feel grateful for their help or feel guilty, as if you were a burden?
- Relationships are not solely based on helping each other. How do you maintain your relationships in other ways besides helping? What can you do to balance your relationships? Is a balance of give-and-take important?