

Asking For Help Can Be A Statement Of Strength

By Melissa Weidman

At a recent meeting of local healthcare and social services providers, many around the table shared common challenges, including frustration in not being able to get to family caregivers early enough before they are in crisis.

Some of the excuses they hear:

"We're waiting until we're ready."

"We don't want to ask for a hand-out."

"We don't want strangers in our house."

Whether it's healthcare, food, housing, mental health or even emergency services, a common theme emerges. New Englanders typically value independence and self-sufficiency. Only when faced with the desperation of an acute crisis do they finally seek assistance. Asking for help is perceived as a statement of failure.

But if they sit down and count the many ways they've received assistance in the past, they might be surprised at the extent of that list. Think of the many parents, teachers, family members, co-workers, clergy and friends who encouraged and advised or gave of their time to help when it was needed. Or the physicians, nurses and home health aides who provided care when they were sick or injured. Or when they provided support or help to others.

That list would likely be as long, or longer.

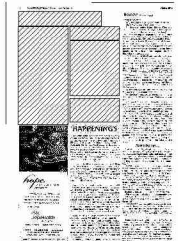
So why, when faced with something as dire as a health crisis or financial emergency, are so many reluctant or even ashamed, to ask for help?

Fortunately, in this community we have an abundance of social and health service providers and many of them are underutilized.

Take hospice as an example. With the many different hospice providers on Cape Cod alone, it's estimated that all those agencies together are serving only half the patients and families considered eligible for hospice care at any one time. Surveys demonstrate that people experiencing serious illness would prefer to be cared for at home, surrounded by their loved ones and enjoying the best possible quality of life.

Hospice expertise lies in fulfilling that goal whenever possible. Yet patients often call hospice the best-kept secret in health care.

Most of our services, including patient care, medications, supplies, equipment or counseling, are funded through Medicare or private insurance. We can



serve patients for whatever amount of time they're eligible. Nationally, half the patients served by hospice receive services for less than 18 days, often because so many people are unaware of these benefits or simply delay too long before asking for help. And this makes it challenging for the hospice team to meet the full range of physical, emotional and spiritual needs of the patient and family.

In addition, not asking for or accepting help early enough ends up costing all of us more than necessary. Instead of receiving preventive care at home through services like Hope HouseCalls, society pays the cost of unnecessary trips to the emergency room, a far more expensive form of care. Depression or trauma might have been preventable with counseling or assistance if requested in time.

Many of us for years have provided love, guidance, support and expertise to countless others. When the inevitable need arises, ignore the illusion of failure. Be graceful in asking for and receiving help.

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HopeHealth announces it has progressed to a Level Two partner of We Honor Veterans, a pioneering campaign developed by the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization in collaboration with the Department of Veterans Affairs.

HopeHealth provided over 30 pinning ceremonies to veterans in their care and trained veteran volunteers throughout their service area during 2015.

To learn more about We Honor Veterans, visit [WeHonorVerterans.org](http://WeHonorVeterans.org).