

Will Power

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FROM THE PIONEERS ASSISTANCE FUND

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HEALTH CONFIDENTIAL

Q: My sister and I are concerned about my mom's health, but she's very private. Is there a polite way to ask an aging parent to share health information with the family?

A: It's a very important question for many reasons. Do you want to know so you can help? Are you concerned about financial resources that might be needed to treat a condition or allow mom to remain in her home? Is her memory slipping and you worry she may not remember important instruction from the doctor? Or perhaps you are documenting your family health history because it may affect your own?

Any of these is a legitimate reason for inquiring about your mother's health and overall medical care. Problem is, for many years people have inquired for less savory reasons and this has led to strict privacy laws for medical practices, hospitals and insurance companies. Federal law, called HIPAA (Health Information Portability and Accountability Act of 1996), established "PHI," Protected Health Information standards that make sharing information with anyone other than the patient a crime. The general idea is that you are the owner of your PHI and only you can decide who can know it.

If you want your family to have access, you sign an Authorization to Release Medical Information with your provider, or you have a legally valid Durable Power of Attorney (DPOA) for Healthcare, or similar document (they vary by state) that allows a surrogate to know your medical situation.

This should give you a few clues on how to approach your mom:

- *Make it a family project to review important documents together. PAF can help you get the forms you need.*
- *If she has an advance directive for DPOA for healthcare, and you are named as an agent, make sure you have a copy. Read it to see if your authority takes effect only on her incapacity.*
- *Make your request about you (I need to complete a health questionnaire about our family health history) and not about her (older adults need to feel independent).*
- *Don't force it or insist. Assure your mom you respect her privacy, and you want to be ready in case of an emergency. It's a legitimate request, so treat it with the legitimate respect it deserves.*

Sources:

"Health Information Privacy" by U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services at <http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy/>.

Find helpful resources at our website or call one of our social workers today: http://wrpioneers.org/educational_brochures.aspx.

JOKE OF THE MONTH

Why did Moses need a shrink? Because when they found him he was in de Nile.

- A Prairie Home Companion Website

WILL CALL

Do you or someone you know need our assistance? Call toll-free (888) 994-3863 or wrpioneers.org





SELF-CARE & APPRECIATION

In our February Will Power issue, we introduced our readers to the concept of mindfulness, or being present, in your everyday life. A very simple component of mindfulness is taking a moment to appreciate what is literally in front of you, or around you. Spend your moment of mindfulness with your mind on what you have.

Try to experience a feeling of appreciation - call it gratitude, if you like - for what you have, but on a very small scale. You may have a grand house or a studio apartment. You may have a luxury car or a free bus pass. Can you appreciate the value in each? Now move inward and appreciate something more personal.

If you have nothing more than the ability to have a moment of quiet reflection, appreciate it. If you have an important meeting today, or if you got a nice email, appreciate it. If you can't think of anything special to appreciate, then you can appreciate:

Your breath. As you sit quietly, appreciate your lungs and air to breathe. Appreciate that each inhale brings essential oxygen into your body and each exhale removes toxins.

Your hearing. If you can hear yourself breathing, appreciate the intricacies of your ear.

Your smile. Do you feel silly, sitting there while appreciating your breathing and hearing? Then laugh and smile and appreciate that you can find humor in everyday life.

Your humanity. Mindfulness is a unique human experience. To sit quietly with one's thoughts is a blessing of intellect and leisure.

"Once we discover how to appreciate the timeless values in our daily experiences, we can enjoy the best things in life." — Jerome K. Jerome, British author and humorist.

Psychology research from several American universities has shown that people who practice gratitude, even on a small scale, are more calm, have a better outlook on life, are less likely to have conflict in their daily dealings with people, are more emotionally resilient, and report better social lives. But you've got to start small. For example, the social workers at the Will Rogers Motion Picture Pioneers Assistance Fund appreciate you taking the time to read this. Thank you.

Sources:

Read more quotes about appreciation at http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/keywords/appreciate_4.html#Ov4ttTfTuCH8ruhT.99

"A Serving of Gratitude May Save the Day" by John Tierney. New York Times 11/21/2011.

“ QUOTE OF THE MONTH

I hope we never see the day when a thing is as bad as some of our newspapers make it. - Will Rogers

