Families of individuals with caregiving needs may have a significant challenge – one you, as a caring person, can help them with. Here are some simple ways you can help families cope with the challenges of a loved one with caregiving needs:

- **Learn** about the diseases and needs of the person so that you can help the family understand what’s happening to their loved one.

- **Listen** to them when they express their feelings. Draw them out by saying, “This must be tough for you, too. How are you doing?”

- **Don’t offer advice**, or give directions unless specifically asked. Listen and support!

- Always **call the family member by name**. If you can’t remember it, ask them, and re-introduce yourself. This helps them feel like an important person in the caring team, not just a “visitor.”

- Tell the family **positive things** about their loved one. So often, we only contact the family when there is a problem. Go out of your way to tell them good things instead. Families especially appreciate knowing what their loved one does when they’re gone; what they enjoy doing with other people, especially caregivers; what activities they enjoy.

- If you need to contact a family member by phone, **be sure to let them know** the severity of the concern right away. If it is not an emergency, say that first: “Hello, Mrs. Smith? I’m calling about your mother – I want you to know, first of all, that this is not an emergency. . . ”

- **Laugh, hug, and celebrate life** with family members whenever you can. Their lives are often filled with so much stress and loss that the very best gift you can give them is a little joy in their lives.

- **Don’t share your own problems** with family members, even if they ask, or are good listeners. You can share funny stories about your family or pets, but try not to add to the family members’ burdens by sharing your own problems or concerns.

*Remember, family members of the people we care for are also our responsibility. To truly care for the whole person, we must also care for his or her loved ones. Practice these principles, and you’ll be a treasured caregiver to your families.*