

Mutual SUPPORT

Mutual Support is one of the values of ElderSpirit Community. Here members develop **face-to-face relationships** through which they offer and receive support. They express their needs and convictions, listen to each other and strive to act responsibly, considering their good and the **good of others**.

One of Nine Core Values

Spirituality • Service • Simple Lifestyle and Respect for the Earth • Arts and Recreation • Health • Care during Illness and Dying • Mutual Assistance • Kindness

Mutual Support weaves together all values into a tapestry of living within ElderSpirit. Through encouragement, empowerment, assistance and sharing, the mutual support system is completed by all values working together as a whole.

The **Mutual Support Committee** is a committee of ElderSpirit Member Association. Its mission is to foster **wellness** and **independence** in the community. It offers information via health notices, programs and forums to facilitate health awareness. Members may offer individualized presentations on exercise and nutrition. Social interaction and expression **encourage** members to learn ways of self-support, asking for, giving and receiving of help. These are all necessary for the **Mutual Support system** to work smoothly.

ElderSpirit Community
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Abingdon, VA 24210



www.elderspirit.org

What Members Think About Mutual SUPPORT

It is important for members to understand what mutual support entails. Information was gleaned from the community through forums and interviews. Questions that were asked were: How have you given support? How have you received support? What have you done for self-support?

How have you given support?

Members responded with varying degrees of answers, including, "I provide transportation for others without vehicles," "I have fed pets and watered plants while a member was on vacation," "I have provided meals or done laundry for someone who was sick," and "I visit with friends, make daily phone calls or just listen."

What have you done for self-support?

Making time and commitment to self-support is equally important. Members of ElderSpirit shared many ways they accomplish this. "I take two mile walks every day", "Practice meditation", "Set boundaries by saying yes to yourself and being able to say no", "I pray and stay spiritually connected", "Eat well and exercise," and finally, "Stop criticizing self!"

How have you received support?

One member said, "Receiving support is so comforting when you really need it. It makes you know that people really care." A member spoke of how she felt at a birthday celebration that was held in her honor, how special it made her feel. "When you have no close family around, being visited in the hospital or rehab is so important," "I really need help with getting to and from appointments, and I have people I can count on for either doing it or finding someone who can." "I have received help from volunteers on the Neighborly Support List, to help in my time of need."



The Mutual SUPPORT MODEL

The Mutual Support Model initially had three key components: able to ask for help, able to provide help, able to accept help. Over time, as the community grew it became understood that in order to make mutual support real-

ly work, each member must also commit to the responsibility of taking care of self. Living with the concept of self-support, both mentally and physically, better enables individuals to provide, accept and ask for support.

The Neighborly Support Coordination System

The ElderSpirit Mutual Support Committee encourages members to join the Mutual Support System, which involves choosing two Neighborly Support Coordinators. Neighborly Support coordinators and the member mutually agree on terms and conditions by filling out a form together which will help and assist in a member's time of need. They are not physical caretakers, although if this is agreed upon between the two members, it can be part of the relationship. It is also understood that within this relationship, a support person may not be able to help in certain situations or may have to step aside for a time of respite.

The Mutual Support Committee encourages members to use their coordinators when in need of short-term assistance. If it appears that assistance will be needed for more than two weeks, the member and their coordinators will discuss what, if any, further help from within or outside of ElderSpirit Community if necessary is possible.

Members are linked to the community from volunteering for the Neighborly Support Tasks by signing up on a list to offer help from within our community. As an independent living community, compassionate, neighborly support within the Mutual Support System is key.

Contact:
ElderSpirit Community
Member Association
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