



The Helping Village

A Guide to Organizing a Caregiving Team

General Guidelines

1. This kind of project is provided **short-term peer support** for someone so they can revitalize, heal or re-organize their life. Generally, it works well for a 1 to 3-month commitment.
2. The person receiving support must **communicate** what they want clearly and be able to communicate with the Liaison throughout the project. The group cannot proceed without their expressed consent and continued guidance!
3. Sometimes, the person's needs may **exceed the scope** of this format or the available resources. In those cases, professional help and advocacy will be needed. (e.g. social worker, hospital, doctors, member of parliament, advocate, lawyer etc)
4. When you organize your volunteers on a collaborative online platform, you won't need tons of emails or phone calls. There are many tools and sharing platforms that make organizing much easier.

3 Recommended Platforms to Organize Your Caregiving Team:

<http://lotsahelpinghands.com/>

<https://www.mealtrain.com/>

Email combined with Google Documents

5. My wish is to spread the idea of the Helping Village and encourage people to create villages for themselves or for someone in need!

I hope this guide will give you ideas, shorten your learning curve or inspire your own loving experiments...

6. If you want to tell me about your helping village project or wish to share some tools and best practices for organizing caregiving teams, please share in the comments section of the article at <http://littlewoo.org/when-you-need-a-village-how-to-organize-a-caregiving-team/>

or email me at treasures@littlewoo.org

May you witness humanity's tremendous generosity as you gather help with an open heart and clear guidelines.

May you witness your own beautiful heart in action as you help others during their times of challenge!



Creating A Helping Village

1. Find Your Liaison

This is a trusted person who agrees to be your coordinator and spokesperson.

They will be working with you by phone or skype, email and on some type of online collaborative platform. To conserve energy, you may speak mainly with them and they can communicate with the team on your behalf. They are also the one that responds to questions from the team.

They will help you create a Care Plan, post it online on a collaborative platform, gather your team and write a weekly team update during the project. It may be best to reserve their energy for liaison-only work.

2. Create Your Care Plan & Calendar on a Collaborative Platform

A) With your liaison's help, create your Care Plan on an online platform.

This is a list of your most urgent emotional, practical, health or financial needs. Remember that this is a volunteer effort so it may be best to focus on a few needs. (2 to 3 at most)

These platforms allow the Liaison and all volunteers to add their details in real-time, in a central location where everyone can see all changes immediately. This reduces the need for a pile of emails.

B) Ensure your platform has a team calendar (like a table into Google docs or a Google Calendar).

You will need a calendar for caregiving projects involving a rotation of volunteers helping on different dates. If your project involves just ONE date (like a move), then a calendar is not needed.

What you may need on your Care Plan:

- ~ Your contact info (phone, home address and email)
- ~ Your Liaison's contact info (phone and email)
- ~ A list of all team members names, contact info and skill set
- ~ Your specific needs with clear instructions on each task and the **amount of help** you need each week (approx number of hours, frequency or specific times).
- ~ Ideally, each helper can volunteer once or twice maximum a month. Two to three hours per shift is reasonable as more be hard to sustain for a grassroots group.

EXAMPLES: Recipes or dietary details if you need help with food prep.

Exact name of items and store location if you need things delivered.

Instructions for household tasks. Caregiving guidelines (your quirks & preferences)



What's in your Team Calendar:

Whatever calendar tool you use, include clear instructions for how your team will use it. Some platforms like <https://www.mealtrain.com/> and <http://lotsahelpinghands.com/> include a calendar.

Basically, you will post the times & dates when you could use help + the tasks for each + how many volunteers needed. Then your team members will post their name + the task they will help with on the date/time they are committing to.

3. Build Your Team

A) With your liaison's help, compile a list of possible team members.

Who do you feel is reliable and trustworthy? (based on your intuition and/or experience)
Who has the skills, abilities or resources you need?

Consider family, close friends, colleagues and acquaintances. Consider any groups you belong to like your tribes, teams, clubs, sport/art/business groups, social networks, facebook groups or forums. Sometimes, organizations may be needed: government agencies or representatives (municipal, provincial and federal), social workers, advocates, non-profits, charities, media, grassroots groups etc.

Depending on how much help you need and for how long, figure out the number of helpers you need. Generally, 3 hours of help per month from each person is sustainable for 2 to 3 months.

B) With your liaison's help, invite people to join your Helping Village.

You can do this by email or do a simple call-out on Facebook, asking for volunteers who'd be willing to help you once a month. If using a platform like <http://lotsahelpinghands.com/>, you can post your project link in your initial invite. Those who are interested will sign up on the platform.

What's in the Emailed Invite:

~ Brief intro about the Helping Village Concept and if possible, do link to this article:
<http://littlewoo.org/when-you-need-a-village-how-to-organize-a-caregiving-team/>

~ A brief summary of your Care Plan

~ A link to the collaborative platform so they can sign up if they wish to take part

~ Express your appreciation for everyone, whether they choose to take part or not.



4. Do Weekly Updates

- A) Do a weekly check-in with your Liaison, especially if changes occur. (A call is easier than an email)
- B) With help from your Liaison, update your Care Plan and Calendar as needed.
- C) Work with your Liaison to send a weekly update to your team using your tool of choice.

What's in the Weekly Message to Your Team:

- ~ The latest news about your **health** or situation
- ~ Any updates or changes to the Care Plan
- ~ A reminder to sign up for **their volunteer task or shift**
- ~ **Gratitude** for your **Liaison** and team (**the Liaison can include a short personal note from you**)
- ~ Invite feedback or questions from your team (to be **directed to the Liaison**)

TIP: Ideally, send only one update a week to your team. Too many messages may overwhelm people.

5. Wrap Up With Appreciation

- A) When the project is complete, send a personal update to the whole team. Share how you are doing and how this project impacted your life.
- B) Express your thanks to each member and list their names individually if possible. It's a wonderful touch to acknowledge each person who took part in your project.
- C) If you or your liaison have energy to coordinate, it may be fun to host a Team Potluck so members can meet each other. This can happen anytime during the project or once your energy allows you to take part.
- D) Other ways to express thanks: Mail thank you cards to each member. Offer your time and energy to future helping villages. Expand your faith in humanity!



Extra Tips:

1. Remember that your ability to express what you want and being responsiveness to your Liaison (even when your energy is limited) will help keep the team going.
2. Practice releasing shame, embarrassment, guilt or apologies for needing help!

Remember that this is a circuit of kindness that you are part of. Giving and receiving are both valid. Whenever you have regained your energy, you will be equally willing to help others!

BONUS RESOURCES:

COLLABORATIVE TEMPLATE:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1q_llvgRVuzTvMELiYdc_ik44B0-OK_Ng_oPn3jvODYY/edit?usp=sharing

This is a sample Helping Village Collaborative Template. Feel free to copy/ paste the text to your own collaborative document as a starting point!

VIDEO: When You Need A Village – How to Organize A Caregiving Team

<http://littlewoo.org/when-you-need-a-village-how-to-organize-a-caregiving-team/>

VIDEO: 7 Practices in Asking & Receiving:

<http://littlewoo.org/learn-to-ask-for-help-when-you-need-it/>

ARTICLE: 8 Reasons We Don't Ask For Help:

<http://littlewoo.org/why-we-dont-ask-for-help-and-how-to-get-over-it/>

ARTICLE: 3 Practices of Generosity That Can Change the World

<http://littlewoo.org/the-helping-village-3-practices-of-generosity-that-can-change-the-world/>