What is Respite?
Respite is a break for family caregivers, parents of children with special needs, and others whose loved ones are dependent for their care. Respite is short-term, temporary breaks, not to be confused with day care so we can work.

Working is not really respite. Yes, we get away, but do not get a rest. True respite is a time to do something for oneself while our loved one with special needs stays with someone else. It is time for a date, spending time with other children, getting a nights sleep, or going away overnight or on vacation.

Creating a circle of support is not easy, but IT IS ESSENTIAL to get enough breaks, since THERE IS NOT ENOUGH PUBLIC FUNDING for a few hours of respite, let alone full time day or home care.

Most of us want family members to help us. But even when family is near, you may need to ask for help. Do not say “they should not have to be asked.” Until you are a family caregiver yourself, you can’t understand. AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE ASK THEM TO COME, BEFORE A CRISIS!

REMIND THEM THEY ARE SHOWING THEIR OWN CHILDREN WHAT WE DO WHEN SOMEONE IN OUR FAMILY NEEDS CARE! (You might have to ask: “What are your plans for your OWN care WHEN the time comes? If you’re counting on family, well...”
GIVE OTHERS THE GIFT OF HELPING YOU — even if it is not easy for us Americans!

Ask people ...at church or anywhere someone takes an interest in your loved one. Always remember that these respite providers are the people who will know what to do in a crisis and be able to take over immediately if something happens to us. Most of us were raised to be independent, but most of us want to help others, too.

Invite others into your “circle” and let them have the benefit of giving to others. And if your loved one objects to having others take care of them, do your best to persuade them that it will help you be a better family caregiver AND it might get a new friend for them too!

It doesn’t matter if your house is dusty...this is not the same old life! Stop making excuses or being such a perfectionist that you keep people out!

START SMALL AND EARLY while your child is young or your loved one can still interact with people. PLEASE DO NOT WAIT FOR A CRISIS! Invite someone to bring supper after a doctor’s appointment or a day of tiring therapy. Ask for help to go to church or other places. Ask the youth or men’s group at church to do yard work. Small tasks will get their foot in the door and you begin a relationship! Then later they may do respite.

USE WWW.LOTSAHELPINGHANDS.COM TO COORDINATE YOUR CIRCLE. Teach and build their skill and your trust over time until you and your loved one can let them do actual respite.

Sometimes you may have to pay something, at least for gas, or offer to bake a cake or sew something...whatever makes you feel ok or gets you the help...

BUT DO IT!

AFTERTHOUGHTS: One quarter of American families are taking care of someone. That leaves three quarters of the rest of the people to help them.

Did you feel good the last time you helped someone else?

The Lifespan Respite System: partnering respite organizations are working to create a statewide system for all family caregivers of all ages.

We thank our Partner, Family Connection of S.C., Inc. for design of the Circle of Support chart on the front.