

When The Person You Are Caring For Resists Help

Meeting the needs of the person you are caring for can be difficult. At times, as a family caregiver, it may be necessary to bring in others to help "share the care." This necessity may be met with resistance from care recipients, who do not want someone else caring for them or do not want "strangers" in their homes.

It is important to talk with your family member and adhere to his or her wishes. Remember, unless people experience some cognitive difficulty, they are still responsible for making decisions about their lives. They may make decisions you wouldn't make, but it is their choice. This can be difficult for a caregiver when some relief is needed or when there are safety concerns.

Developing empathy for care recipients' situations and why they might be resisting help can be an important first step. It is often difficult for people to accept help because it means having to acknowledge illness or aging, and the physical and cognitive changes that accompany it. Family members requiring outside help are forced to recognize their loss of independence, along with their loss of privacy. Imagine what it would be like to depend on a stranger or even your own son or daughter to bathe you or help toilet you. By resisting help, people try to deny these changes and the reality of their situation.

If the person you are caring for resists help, be patient and keep the following suggestions in mind:

- Introduce changes slowly. Give them time to accept the idea that they are now unable to do some things for themselves.

- Assure them they have a say in decisions about their care. You wouldn't want someone to make all of your decisions without consulting you.

- Offer a trial period. They may be willing to try home support for two months, if they know they can change their minds later.

- Sometimes people are more willing to accept in-home help if it is presented as being for the caregiver, for instance, someone to help clean the house.

- Prepare yourself by learning about the services available and how to access them so you have this information handy when needed.

- Regular contact and reassurance that you are supporting your family member's right to autonomy can go a long way to dealing more smoothly with an emergency when it arises.

- If a choice seems silly or unimportant to you, try to see why it may be important to your family member. Listen to their concerns and validate them.

- If they make choices that seem dangerous, try to negotiate possible solutions. Arrange for someone to take walks with them, if they are unsafe by themselves.

- Involve a third-party, a trusted professional (physician, minister) or family friend, who can help mediate discussions.

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By: Barbara Small