



When the Person you are Caring for Resists Help

It can be difficult as a family caregiver to meet all the needs of the person you are caring for and it may become necessary to bring in others to help “share the care”. This may be met with resistance from the care recipient who does not want someone else caring for them or does not want “strangers” in their home.

It is important to talk with your family member and adhere to their thoughts and wishes. We need to remember that unless the person is experiencing some cognitive difficulty, they still are responsible for making decisions about their life. They may make decisions that you wouldn't make, but it is their choice. Remember they are adults. This can be difficult for you as a caregiver when you need some relief or when you are concerned about someone's safety.

It can be helpful to first develop some understanding for the care recipient's situation and why they might be resisting help. It is often difficult for many of us to accept help because of what it represents to us. By accepting help, your family member will have to acknowledge their illness or aging and the physical and cognitive changes that come along with it. They will be forced to recognize their loss of independence along with the loss of privacy that comes with having others coming into their home. 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 we try to deny these changes and the reality of our 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 it for themselves.
- Assure them that they have a say in decisions about their care. You wouldn't like someone else to make all your decisions without consulting you.
- Offer a trial period. They may be willing to try home support for two months, if they know they could change their mind 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 you keep the house clean.
- 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 them. 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 your discussions.

By Barbara Small, Program Development Coordinator, Family Caregivers' Network