

by Nancy Webre, for The Bulletin

CARING FOR LOVED ONES: DEALING WITH RESISTANCE



Caring for an older loved one can be challenging, particularly if they are resistant to care. Many older persons prefer to stay living at home, but this can be a challenge for those who have increasing cognitive or physical needs. Getting an aging loved one to accept our suggestions for help can be difficult. However, before pushing too hard, try to understand their fears about aging. Many older people don't feel their children understand the physical and emotional toll of age-related declines. They often feel they'll be fine on their own. Trying to convince a loved one who doesn't want help can be very frustrating. In fact, this is one of the most common and difficult caregiving challenges that adult children face. As a loved one ages, he or she is facing the loss of independence, physically and mentally. Most of us value our independence and accepting care can mean a loss of privacy and the loss of normal routines. For someone who has lived alone for many years, the thought of a stranger coming into their home to assist with personal care such as bathing, can be frightening and depressing. There may also be financial concerns about spending money on services they don't feel they need. How can you approach a loved one about the need for care?

Start early while your loved one is healthy and independent. Don't wait for a health crisis. Ask questions about what they want for their future such as, "Where do you see yourself in the future?"

Be patient and respectful of your loved one. Be understanding of how they feel. Choose a time in which you are both relaxed. If they are relaxed at home, then talk with them at home. Explain that accepting care as you grow older is not a sign of weakness. In-home care might help them stay active and prolong independence into old age.

Ask questions about their preferences. It may take several conversations to discover reasons why your parent is reluctant to accept help in the home. Listen with empathy and validate your loved one's feelings. Ask questions to determine why they may be refusing help, "Is it about a lack of privacy or having a stranger in the house?"

Include your loved one in on the selection process when interviewing in-home care agencies. Being included in this process also preserves your loved one's feelings of having some control.

Include other family members who will support your decision, but don't "gang-up" on your loved one. You may need to also enlist the help of health professionals who can also discuss the importance of care and persuade them to get the care they need.

Don't give up. Don't feel guilty if your loved one doesn't agree or refuses home care all together. Continue to talk about the importance of care. Keep the lines of communication open. You can always revisit the subject again in the future.

After talking with your loved one and utilizing some of the above tips, he or she may still be resistant to care. These tips are not fool proof and may need some "re-adjusting", depending on your situation. Resistance is a challenge many family members face. By understanding the impact that needing and accepting help has on an elderly person, you can help to alleviate their fears and work with them to remain healthy and independent.

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Nancy Webre, BS, MS
CEO/Owner
Geriatric Care Manager
Locally Owned & Operated Since 1982. State Licensed & RN Supervised



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