

## WHEN YOUR PARENTS OR PARTNER WON'T EXCEPT HELP

Your mother resists in-home helpers, insisting you can wait on her. Your frail father won't stop driving. Your aunt denies the need for a personal care aide, in spite of her unwashed hair and soiled clothes. Your grandmother refuses to move to an assisted living facility "because it's full of old people".

Sound familiar? Nothing is harder for a family caregiver than an elder loved one who refuses needed help.

A senior in the early stages of cognitive impairment may be the most difficult to deal with. An angry father or agitated mother is aware of this miserable change in their brain they don't quite understand. Avoid reverting to the same coping mechanisms you had during adolescent power struggles with your parent — screaming, yelling or running out of the room.

*Here are twelve strategies to help overcome the objections of a willful loved one in need of help:*

### 1. **Start Early**

Ideally, families have relaxed conversations about caregiving long before a health crisis. Look for opportunities to ask questions like, "Mom, where do you see yourself getting older?" or "How would you feel about hiring a housekeeper or driver so you could stay home?"

### 2. **Be Patient**

Ask open-ended questions and give your loved one time to answer. It may take several talks to discover the reason your mother, a meticulous housekeeper, has fired five aides in a row is simply that they neglected to vacuum under the dining room table.

### 3. **Probe Deeply**

Ask questions to determine why an elder refuses help -- then you can tailor a solution, is it about a lack of privacy, fears about the cost of care, losing independence or having a stranger in the house?. To build trust, listen with empathy and validate rather than deny your loved one's feelings.

### 4. **Offer Options**

If possible, include your parent in interviews or in setting schedules. Let them choose certain days of the week or times of day to have a home health aide come. Emphasize an aide will be a companion for walks, concerts, museum visits and other favorite activities.

**5. Recruit Outsiders Early**

Don't hesitate to ask a health care professional that is well-known to the elder, a religious leader or their own friend to suggest that your parent needs help.

**6. Prioritize Problems**

Choose your battles and recognize what needs to happen and what you want to have happen. Writing them down and numbering by priority can relieve a lot of stress.

**7. Use Indirect Approaches**

If your father has dementia, offering less information may be more effective at times. You could let your parent know the aide is someone very helpful who can take your father on walks, fix him meals, and help him throughout the day. You don't need to explain every aspect of care the aide will provide.

**8. Take it Slowly**

Introduce a new aide in gradually. Start with short home visits or meet for coffee, then bring the aide along to the doctor's a few weeks later. Leave early on some pretext, letting the aide accompany your parent home."

**9. Accept Your Limits**

As long as seniors are not endangering themselves or others, let them make their own choices. You can't be at your parent's side all the time. Bad things can happen, and you can't prevent them," she says. Try to accept limits on what you can accomplish and not feel guilty. All adults have the right to make decision — even poor ones.

**10. Suggest that they are doing it "for the kids"**

Sometimes the elder will concede if they feel they are doing it for someone they love even though they don't see the need.

**11. Propose the concept that accepting help will actually increase independence**

Stress that receiving help can be empowering, not disempowering, for an aging parent: Accepting some help can allow one to do more of what one wants and maintain self-sufficiency. A person that may otherwise be homebound is able to go out into the community with a walker. Likewise, if your father would accept help with mowing his lawn, then he would conserve energy enabling him to have the energy to do something of more importance to him. With help we become more, not less.

**12. Hire an Aging Life Care Professional™/Care Manager!**