

How to respond if your elderly parent refuses help

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Written by Jenna Jaeger, *Felician Village Admissions Coordinator*

Watching your parents decline mentally or physically is one of the hardest things adult children will ever have to do. If you are involved in helping your mom or dad find appropriate care, you may feel a lot of emotions including sadness, frustration, and the biggest one of all, guilt.

Here are a few tips on how to approach your parents when you believe they need a little extra help:

Accept the situation – As much as you want to help your parent, you cannot force them to do anything. They still want to be treated like adults, and let's face it, it's hard for any of us to admit when we need a little extra help.

Communicate your suggestions carefully – Be sensitive to the fears and insecurities that are causing your parents resistance. Watch your tone. For example, let's say you want to hire someone to help your mom with chores at home, but she's worried about the cost. The best way to handle this would be to express to your mom how her refusal is affecting you personally. How would it make you feel if she accepted your help? Would it give you peace of mind? Would you be more relaxed during the workday?



Be honest - When offering suggestions, it's ok to focus on the positive, however, don't shy away from discussing the details your parent is likely to disagree with. If what you say comes off as coddling them, the conversation will be less productive. As aging parents become less able to care for themselves, existing dynamics with their children change. This role reversal is hard for them. The last thing you want to do is intensify the pain by saying things that make your parent feel like a child. At the end of the day, you want to help your parent make a major life change. Make sure that you're being reasonable, but you also want to make the potential risks of not getting help clear.

Observe and listen - People are more likely to take advice from those who listen to them. Are you *really* hearing what your parent has to say? Regular conversations with your parents will build trust. Your mom or dad will appreciate you taking interest in the things that matter to them. You'll be able to help them make better decisions regarding their health when you have a better understanding of where they're coming from.

Be prepared for resistance – It's safe to admit we all know what it's like to deal with a stubborn parent or loved one. So, you've considered all options, and still get pushback. You need to present the strongest case possible by responding to whatever it is holding your parent back. Do the research you need to do, carefully consider the points you need to get across, and be

prepared for objections. Discussing health and safety issues with your parents can be emotionally draining. If expressing your concerns to your parents is causing a rift between you, remember this is likely temporary. When aging parents realize their children are taking action because they care, acceptance often follows.

If you, or your parent, thinks it is time to move to a senior living facility and you would like more information about Felician Village, call Jenna Jaeger, Admissions Coordinator at 920-684-7171, ext. 231 or send an email to jjjaeger@felicianvillage.org