

HOW TO TELL WHEN YOUR LOVED ONE NEEDS HELP

Approaching someone you care about with your concerns regarding their ability to live independently can be difficult. On the one hand you understand the value of autonomy and independence. On the other hand, their safety is your major concern. Independence is so highly prized in our culture; it is difficult to find a balance between showing concern and overprotection. This article is intended to provide some quick tips on how to tell if a person is in need of help and may no longer be able to live independently.

Health

Has your loved one been diagnosed with a chronic disease such as diabetes, heart disease? Is your loved one following the doctor's orders for diet, exercise, and medication properly? Is their mobility affected? Do they have chronic hearing or vision impairment that interferes with their daily lives? Have they been diagnosed with a mental health condition, such as depression or cognitive impairment, such as Alzheimer's or dementia?

One of the main issues to consider here is safety. Because of these conditions or their actions, is your loved one in danger of being injured or hurting someone else? Another concern is for your relative's general well being. Does their physical condition prevent them from doing the things they enjoy? If the answer to either of these questions is yes, it may be time to approach your loved one about the kinds of assistance they may want or need.

Difficulty with Daily Tasks

Sometimes health conditions can result in problems performing everyday tasks. These everyday tasks can be divided into two categories: instrumental and personal care tasks.

Instrumental Tasks tend to require more mobility and complicated thought processes. Some questions to consider regarding these everyday tasks follow. Is your loved one able to prepare and cook meals? What about do laundry and other household tasks? Can your relative shop for groceries and other necessary items, including handling money? Is he able to pay bills and deal with paperwork and finances? Do they take their medications as directed? Can they use the telephone or know whom to contact in an emergency?

Think about whether your family member can do these tasks: without help from another person, with a little help, or if they are not able to do these things without help. Then, if your loved one needs help, consider whether help is readily available or who might be able to help with these tasks.

Personal Care Tasks cover more basic aspects of daily living, such as bathing dressing, and grooming. Does your relative require assistance in bathing, dressing, grooming and personal hygiene? Does your loved one have problems getting around the house or getting to the bathroom on time? What about getting in and out of bed or a chair? Does your loved one require help with these things, and is help available?

Additional Things to Consider

The Neighborhood – does your loved one live in a safe neighborhood. Are their friends or relatives nearby for your relative to rely on for some assistance?

Social Interaction – does your relative have a chance to get out and see friends and family or are they home

alone most of the time.

The Home – have adaptations been made in the home, such as grab bars and non-skid strips in the bathtub or shower, non-slip rugs in the bathroom and kitchen? Does your relative have adequate lighting especially in the stairway? If your relative requires a walker or wheelchair, are the doorways wide enough and has the furniture been adjusted and obstacles removed to allow them to move around the house freely?

Final Thoughts

Once you have determined that your relative requires some assistance, the next step is to find a service that meets both your and their needs. This may sound simple, but more often than not, this task can be overwhelming. Arranging for the proper care for your family members can become very time consuming, costly, and frustrating. The agencies, paperwork, and payment systems involved in elder care are growing in number and complexity. Geriatric or senior care managers and consultants work with older adults and their families to assess their needs and to identify the most appropriate care providers and facilities in the area.

Convincing your relative that help is needed, is another issue. The last thing anyone wants is a confrontation. But there are ways to address sensitive issues, such as declining health, in a way that allows you to express your concerns and the fact that you care. An experienced senior care consultant can work with you on how to deal with all of these issues, and your relative's fears and concerns, in the most caring, productive, and effective way possible.

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The Senior Care Advisory Network provides older adults and their families with the information and support necessary to make the best choices for care and to plan for future legal, financial, and continued care needs.