



## Resistance to care

by Josie Padro

While many of us are willing to help a family member or friend, sometimes that help is resisted or declined all together. Everyone one has the right to refuse help, but it can be worrisome when there could be a risk of harm.

Resistance to help can have a number or causes. The family member who has up until now lived a lifetime of self sufficiency may find accepting help a blow to self esteem. They may worry about their ability to afford extra care or special equipment.

The following suggestions may help:

**Have an open discussion.** Ask if there are specific tasks that the person needs help with. Share your observations and thoughts about what kind of help they could use. For example, “I notice you become short of breath when you work in the garden. How about if we found someone to do the heavy lifting for you?”

**Share your concerns.** You may say, “I would feel so much better if you had some help with the house work. I know it really tires you out.” Or, “I worry that you might fall. Would you be willing to use a walker when you do your errands?”

**Supply information.** Gather reading material that your family member can review on their own time and at their own pace.

**Don’t rush.** In so many instances accepting help is like issuing a visible public statement that you have become less able. It may take a while to get used to the idea of using aids like wheelchairs or hearing aids.

**Seek reinforcements.** If you are the only one making a suggestion, it may carry less weight than if others voice the same concern. Family meetings can be a good way to open discussion. Go along to doctors’ appointments and raise your concerns while you’re there; your worries may be eased or validated.

When someone we care about rejects what we think is best, we may have to take a second look at what we are asking and why. Is the person in danger? Have we explored all the alternatives? If the person is a competent adult, don’t they have a right to accept risk?

Our role as caregivers is to care and it can be distressing to stand by while a family member rejects the help we think they need. With a little creativity and patience we can hopefully arrive at a solution that's acceptable to everyone.