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When Your Aging Parents Resist Your Help

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Her husband had recently died unexpectedly. Her own health had been deteriorating for some time.



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A son, who lives nearby, worries about her memory and isn't sure she can be left alone. She wants to stay in her home since she is very active in her church. Her son works so isn't always around to make sure she's safe. Her younger son, who lives on the other side of the country, wants to make sure mom is safe so is pressuring her older son to make sure that happens. This situation is very overwhelming for her son.

Does this predicament sound familiar? As a clinical social worker, I have seen these types of scenarios often and it can be a real struggle for the aging parent and their adult children. There are some things you will want to keep in mind as you navigate these difficult waters.

Be Patient

As we age, there are bound to be major changes with our health or loss of a spouse. Some of these changes are sudden. Finding solutions often isn't easy. When a person has lived in a home and a community for many years, it is scary to think of moving away from them, even if it is to be near family where better care can be provided. If your loved one has the mental capacity to be alone and make decisions, give them time to do so. Pushing someone into a decision before they are ready to increase their safety can worsen their health due to the stress.

Work Together to Solve Problems

Although you may think you know what is best for your parent, s/he is still an adult and accustomed to managing his/her own affairs. It is a difficult transition from being the parent to being cared for by your children. My grandmother was diagnosed with colon cancer in her mid-80s. Although her kids wanted her to get surgery, chemo and radiation to fight the cancer, she wanted to live her last

months on this earth without the misery of cancer treatments. Respecting her wishes, her kids worked with her to make sure she had the care she needed in her last days by taking turns to care for her in her own home.

Accept Them for Who They Are

As we age, our priorities may change. If dementia sets in, we may change completely. When I worked in a nursing home, there was a man with dementia who had been happily married start a relationship with another woman at the nursing home. Your parents may date people or do things you don't approve of, like you may have done when you were young. Wise financial decisions and safety may not be their priority.

Let Go; Let God

This is my favorite phrase I learned from a client. There are so many things we try to control in this sinful world but, because of sin, it is just impossible. Your parents are going to age; they are going to get sick. You may want to care for them, but sometimes you just aren't able to, or they resist your care. There are many options, but most aren't ideal. This is when we need to turn to our heavenly Father and let Him take control, like we eventually realize we have to do with our own children. If you are concerned your parent is suffering from dementia and is not competent to make wise decisions, there are legal options.

For additional information and support check out this website: Better Health While Aging <https://betterhealthwhileaging.net/recommended-resources-family-caregivers-month/>. ■

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