

How to Live with an Elderly Person

Living with the older person has unique rewards and may have challenges for all concerned. Patience is needed as well as understanding. They may well prefer to be self sufficient, and will certainly dislike being patronised. But there are some occasions when they may not be able to care for themselves or need help to do so. By being yourself and listening to them, being honest about your own limitations (of time, skills and resources), you can live happily with an older person and they can live happily with you.

Steps

1. Define boundaries with every one who shares a living space with you, both physical and mental. Don't intrude through these without permission.
2. Learn to accept the person's decisions. They may be able pick things up if they drop them, clean up well after themselves, such as in the kitchen and bathroom, and may not be forgetful of turning off appliances and lights, and locking doors. Don't presume that the person is careless or deliberately inconsiderate. Offer to do it for them if you can and wait to see if what you saw as an omission was deliberate on their part. For example they may prefer to leave a hallway light on at night.
3. Distinguish between what can be improved and what cannot be improved in terms of health, functional limitations and mobility. Do not prejudice that because of age this condition is normal, today many researches show that not only can one maintain good health and function up to the last year of life, but that one can reverse certain conditions with physical and mental activities, nutritional supplementation and regular metabolic check. Ageism exists also in compassion and one should not fall into the trap of thinking "nothing can be done".
4. Review any medications with them (with their consent). List the medicines and the drug interaction warnings, as well as the instructions for taking medicine which requires either fasting, or taking with food, and so on.
5. Watch for changes in mood or behavior. Often, an older person will not admit that something bothers them or that they are in pain, not sleeping, or having trouble with eating, and these can be indications for seeking professional medical help.
6. Keep the house organised and uncluttered, especially in a situation where the person has limited mobility, uses a walker, wheelchair, or other mobility assistance, or their eyesight is poor. Discuss installing mobility aids if you are able and the person can use them. This may include grab bars at the toilet and bath tub, a shower seat, or a wheelchair ramp. A space-saving alternative to a ramp is an electric wheelchair lift.
7. Be aware of the temperature of the home. Older people can be very sensitive to cold, or at times, heat.
8. Understand special needs in diet, salt intake, and the like. Older people are often on restricted diets, and are tempted just like the rest of us. Sugar and salt are two common foods that are often limited.

9. Give the person respect and privacy as much as you are able. They may need help with personal hygiene, and that is not a comfortable thing for either of you, but when possible, they should have as much privacy and personal space as it is practical to allow.
10. Watch out for scammers and frauds who take advantage of and prey on older people. This may include con men, salespersons, and people operating under the guise of religious organizations. Do not be offended if your own offers of help are scrutinised.
11. Keep careful records for them if they are not able to. This should include knowing where their family is and how to contact them, emergency medical information, bank records, insurance documents, and other business information if they want you to.
12. Help the person if you are able with keeping their basic grooming presentable. Often elderly people cannot trim finger and toenails, comb or brush their hair, or put on and tie shoes.
13. Be respectful, courteous, and mindful of the person's feelings and ideas. Avoid treating the person like a child. Older people have experienced life much more deeply than we often appreciate. Ask them questions, learn from their experiences, and encourage them to be happy.
14. Support the older person's autonomy to make his or her own choices in life, and do not substitute your own judgement. Every adult has the capacity to make at least some, if not all, of his or her own decisions, so help enhance the person's capacity to do and choose as much as possible for himself or herself. Don't assume merely because of advanced age that people cannot manage their own affairs, even if you do not agree with them.
15. Understand the elderly person's socioeconomic background, and the significant historical events the person experienced. Living through events such as wars, economic depressions, disasters and political upheavals have a great impact on a person, especially during younger, formative years.

Tips

- Older people often do not travel well, due to poor eyesight, low stamina, and incontinence - it can all be fixed and improved.
- There is a wide range of exploitative products on the market to help elderly people cope with daily life some may be useful like large print publications, audio tapes and CD's, loudspeaker telephones and foot warmers. But always ask what is appropriate and acceptable.
- The more active the person is, often the better their health is overall, so be aware you can do too much for them, as easily as too little. Any older person who can still walk reasonably well should never sit too long, as blood clots and decreased circulation in the extremities can be harmful to them.
- Whenever possible listen to the stories of an older person. Their life experiences may teach you something or provide you with new insight.

Warnings

- Check with the pharmacist if the person is taking multiple medications for drug interactions and side effects.

Source and Courtesy: <http://www.wikihow.com/Live-with-an-Elderly-Person>