



Starting a conversation about needing more help as we get older

As we get older, it can feel like there are increasing demands on us. We don't feel "like an old person" – we're still the same person inside. We certainly don't need to be spoken to differently, or treated like we're incapable. But, at the same time, we could use a hand now and then.

"But I don't feel old!"

Many of us experience physical health issues, such as diabetes, arthritis, bladder problems, heart disease and vision or hearing problems. Being able to get around may be harder, and we can't do as much as we could in the past.

"Making dinner for one just doesn't seem worth the effort."

At the same time, our network of peers may be shrinking – just at the time when we need more friends around us. Sadly, some of us lose our spouse - it's a change to our life that can be very hard to adjust to.

Dementia is a disorder that happens to many of us, without our consent. We are not to blame for the frustrating symptoms like forgetfulness – there are biological causes for these which are out of our control. Despite this, many of us find it hard to share our situation and needs with our loved ones.

"He means well, but how he speaks to me, his mother, is infuriating."

Often family members want to help, but how they go about helping is not how we want to be treated.

Involving your loved ones

Loved ones may go through the same reactions as you when you first tell them that your needs are changing. They may fear that they are losing you, or be in denial about the changes which are happening. They may not immediately understand the emotions which you are feeling, and you may be scared that they'll treat you differently, or that you'll be a burden.

You're not alone. Millions of families are making this adjustment as their situations change. Most of the people we work with tell us that it isn't easy to start a conversation about their changing needs, but they are glad once they've done it.

Tips for starting the conversation

- Decide in advance what support you would like from your loved one.
- Bring information about the symptoms that you're experiencing, for example, a leaflet about dementia, diabetes or poor vision. This can give you something to talk around, and you can focus on the facts of what you're facing.
- Be clear with your loved one about how you would like to be treated. Remind them that you're still you.
- Tell your loved one if you're happy for them to inform others of your conversation, or if you'd prefer they didn't.
- There's no need to rush. Some family members are ready to make a plan right away, but some may need time to think about what you've said and consider what it means.

Making your plan with your loved ones

Where to start? For most of us, making a plan can be bewildering. We're so used to managing many parts of our life, and have never stopped to make a list of all the things we have to take care of.

- Make a note of things which are harder for you to manage, such as getting to hard-to-reach locations, or understanding complex bills.
- Let your loved one know whether you'd like to do these things together or if you don't need to be involved.
- What is the thing you miss most? Many of our customers say they'd just like to spend more quality time with their loved ones, and don't want them to spend their time of administrative tasks. If that's the case, make sure to let your loved one know.
- Don't forget you can get a professional service like Public Trust's Personal Assist for things like paying bills, house maintenance and even helping you move if you wish to.

Remember, it can be hard to bring up the Tough Questions, but you don't need all the answers.

To find out how Public Trust could help keep your affairs under control, contact us now:

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