

Catholic Caregivers

'Caregiving is pro-life!'

When Your Care-receiver Doesn't Want Help

There may be times when your loved one simply says no. When he or she wants *nothing* to do with what you're proposing. You may have come up with what you think is a great solution to whatever problem or need your care-receiver is facing, but he or she doesn't see it that way. And so he digs in his heels or she gets that look in her eyes, and you know it's going to take a lot of work on your part to get your loved one to budge on this one.

What can you do to avoid that kind of confrontation?

--*Prepare for a crisis.* It helps to talk about concerns early and often. It's much easier to hold what-if discussions before a crisis arises. "What if you need some help around the house?" "What if you can't safely drive anymore?" What could your loved one do, what could you do, what could someone else do to help out? What are other people you both know doing in those situations, or not doing? The more comfortable your care-receiver is discussing what-ifs, the easier it will be for him or her to tell you when he needs the help.

--*Give some options.* If there's already a need, don't present your choice as "the solution." Try to give a number of possibilities. Let your care-receiver decide. If he or she isn't mentally competent, get professional help to assist you in planning and making necessary decisions.

--*Go with the minimum service first.* Maybe, for example, Mom doesn't want someone in her home several days a week, but she'll agree to a person coming in for two hours once a week to help with the cleaning or laundry. As she and the in-home worker get to know each other, the idea of increasing those hours and the workload may not be nearly as threatening to her.

--*Preserve independence.* Your goal is not to take over your loved one's life but to assist him or her in getting what's needed. That can be done without trampling on his or her right to choose. It can be done while continuing to show great love—and respect—for your care-receiver.

A Caregiver's Prayer

Heavenly Father, help me better understand and believe I can do what you ask me to do.

Forgive me for the times, even now, when I question your judgment.

As I go about the many daily tasks of caregiving, give me energy.

As I watch my loved one oh-so-slowly walk across the room, give me strength.

As I answer his/her repeated question just one more time, give me patience.

As I look for solutions to whatever is the most recent concern, give me wisdom.

As I reminisce with him/her about the "good old days," give me a moment of laughter.

As I get to know my loved one in a new way, seeing both his/her strength and frailty, give me joy.

As I sit beside my loved one's bed waiting for his/her pain medication to take effect, give me comfort.

Lighten my burden, answer my prayer, and give me the strength to do what so often seems impossible.

Give me a quiet place to rest when I need it and a quieting of my anxieties when I'm there.

Change my attitude from a tired, frustrated and angry caregiver to the loving and compassionate one I want to be.

Remain my constant companion as I face the challenges of caregiving and when my job is through and it's time for me to let go, help me remember he/she is leaving my loving arms to enter your eternal embrace. Amen.