

How to help an older person without taking over

Simple ways to support someone while protecting their independence.

When someone starts needing more support, it's natural to want to jump in and help. But the words we use matter. Small changes in language can help someone feel involved, respected and in control, even when they're relying on others more than they used to.



Instead of saying



"I'll do that for you."



"You shouldn't be doing that anymore."



"Here, let me."



"You need help."



"I'll organise everything."



"Don't worry about that."



"You can't manage that anymore."



"I've already sorted it."



Try saying



"Would you like to do it together, or would it help if I took care of it today?"



"How's that feeling these days?"



"What's the hardest part of this task for you?"



"What would make this easier?"



"What would you like to stay in charge of?"



"Would you like me to help with that, or would you rather keep doing it yourself?"



"Is there a different way we could do this that feels easier?"



"Shall we make a plan together?"

Before you help

Take a moment to check in with yourself.

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| ☐ Have I asked what they'd prefer? | ☐ Could we do this together instead? | ☐ Have I left them with choices? |
| ☐ Am I making assumptions about what they can or can't do? | ☐ Am I trying to solve my anxiety or their problem? | ☐ Am I protecting their independence wherever I can? |