



“I don’t need any help!”

Working with clients who are resistant to care

People with dementia are often unaware of their current limitations or how much things have changed, and many truly believe that they don’t need any help. Here are some strategies for implementing care and support when you are met with resistance.

Keep it simple:

Use words that the person with dementia will agree with.

- A person may not want a “caregiver” but are open to the idea of a “companion,” “assistant,” or “someone spending time around the house.”
- Encourage your client’s sense of independence. Let them know you’re there “just in case anything is needed” while reassuring them that they have it all under control.

Make a connection:

Focus on building a relationship.

- Greet your client with enthusiasm and warmth to support feelings of safety and security.
- Arrive to the residence with their favorite flower, food item, or a photo.
- Make eye contact, smile, and pay attention to your body language.
- Use phrases that the client can agree with. For example, “I know you’ve always managed everything on your own. I’m not here to change that. Let’s chat about some things that might make your life easier.”
- Unless there is a risk of wandering, give your client some space and privacy. This can help build trust and confidence.
- If the client sends you home, try walking around the block and returning in a few minutes as if nothing ever happened. Greet them as warmly as you did the first time.

Avoid commitment:

Describe the care arrangement as temporary.

- Long term commitment is scary for someone who is not oriented to time. It’s much easier to say “no” than to agree to something they are unsure of. Use phrases such as:
 - “Don’t worry – I’ll just be here for a little while, the time is going to fly by.”
 - “Your son/daughter asked that I stopped by for a little while. Let’s give it a try for their peace of mind”
- You can use this technique for as long as it will work. It may be months or years!

Stay confident:

Everything is under control.

Always remember that you have the Seniors At Home team to support you—just ask!

To schedule a dementia care consultation email dementiacare@jfcs.org or call 415-449-3712

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