Talking With Your Loved One About Help at Home

Accepting help can feel like a loss of dignity, privacy or independence. Begin with your loved one's priorities and explore how a little support could help them continue doing the things that matter to them.

Ask before suggesting solutions
Choose a quiet time and ask what feels difficult or tiring. Listen to concerns about strangers, cost, privacy or losing control. Avoid labels such as "stubborn" and broad statements such as "You cannot manage anymore."
You could say: "What is taking the most energy these days?" or "What would make having someone help feel more comfortable?"

Use specific examples and shared goals
Describe what you have noticed without blame. Connect support to their goals, such as staying at home or having more energy for enjoyable activities. Be honest about your own needs as a caregiver.
You could say: "I have noticed that laundry leaves you tired. Would you consider help with that so you have more energy for things you enjoy?"

Start with a manageable choice
Suggest one task they identify as useful, such as meal preparation or household chores. Ask the provider about a short introduction or trial, if available. Discuss who will come, what they will do, any cost and how concerns can be raised. Review how it went together.
You could say: "Would you prefer help with meals or laundry?" or "Would you like me to be there when you first meet them?"

If they say no
Ask what is behind the refusal and whether a different task, person or timing would help. Keep them involved in decisions. Avoid threats, guilt or arranging surprise visits. If concerns remain, ask a trusted clinician or care coordinator to help explore options with them.

When memory or understanding is affected
Explain one step at a time, use familiar routines and allow time to respond. Introduce the worker clearly and honestly. If the person becomes distressed, pause and ask the care team for an individualized approach. Seek clinical advice if refusal accompanies a new change in health or behaviour.

Questions and support
Campfire: 613-584-3333 ext. 4100 | communityintake@drdh.org

Campfire Program attendance and help at home can be discussed as separate options. The Campfire Team can discuss program fit; a home-care provider or care coordinator can explain home support options.

Further reading: Senior Helpers Canada Conversation Guide • Dementia Communication Tips • Caregiver Helpline