

Importance of Promoting and Maintaining Independence for Seniors and Disabled Persons

When providing care for a loved one, it is easy to get into the habit of doing everything **FOR** the person rather than **WITH** the person. However, this well-intentioned behavior can actually have a negative influence on the person's wellbeing.

SUSTAINING A FEELING OF INDEPENDENCE IN A PERSON RECEIVING CARE IS IMPORTANT FOR MANY REASONS:

- The person receiving care will appreciate that you are seeing him as an individual still capable of making a contribution to society.
- It gives the person a sense of achievement.
- It gives the person a feeling of purpose for life.
- It makes the person feel that she is not dependent on help from others and can still do something for herself.
- It fights frustration and feelings of futility, which can cause rebellion or even violence.

Encouraging independence in a senior or disabled person involves two techniques: promotion of independence and maintenance of independence.

PROMOTION VS. MAINTENANCE OF INDEPENDENCE

Promotion of a person's independence entails providing opportunities for the person to maintain a better quality of life.

- Encourage him to do things for himself, even if met with reluctance or stubbornness.
- Provide opportunities for exercise and activities.



- Encourage a healthy diet. A healthy lifestyle encourages independence through fighting decline.
- Support brain health through social interaction and games that stretch the mind.

Maintenance of independence is making sure the person in your care is given the tools to follow through with her willingness to do something for herself. Examples include:

- Hire a caregiver through a professional home care agency to provide or arrange for transportation for running errands and attending social functions.
- Assist with home safety adaptations such as bathroom grab bars, hand rails, adequate lighting, home accessibility and furniture placement.
- Research assistive devices such as medication reminder devices, products to assist with specific disabilities and gadgets to make everyday activities such as opening a jar or holding a utensil easier.

FURTHER TIPS ON ENCOURAGING INDEPENDENCE

- Helping the person in your care feel that he or she is not totally dependent on others can be something as simple as letting the person do the washing up or walk a few steps without assistance. It is important to remember that even if the caregiver has to help a little or provide supervision for safety, it will not detract from the sense of achievement.
- Suitable activities will vary from person to person and you may need advice from professionals as to what is and isn't possible.
- Persuasion skills do come in handy if you are caring for a person who is reluctant. It may also be worth taking a step back and trying not to interfere too much.

Contact **Independence-4-Seniors** or visit www.independence4seniors.com to learn more about how our caregivers can make every day a meaningful day in the celebration of life for seniors and disabled persons. Our services include:

- Transportation and special outings
- Exercise and fun activities suited to an individual's capabilities
- Meal planning, preparation and companionship
- Medication reminders
- Recommendations for home safety and adaptive devices

Sources: Elderly Care Tips, "Promoting and Maintaining Independence Whilst Caring for the Elderly" by Eric West