

SENIORS COPING WITH LOSS OF INDEPENDENCE

CAREGIVERS



Senior Independence

Help Seniors Cope with the Loss of Independence

A loss of independence is a fear many seniors have. When this fear is realized, there are several ways caregivers need to help.

According to an AARP study conducted in 2012, 57% of seniors over age 70 do not find it easy to live alone and need help with daily tasks. This loss of independence can have a toll on senior's psychological and physical well-being.

Most people begin to live and perform daily life tasks independently by the age of 20. About 50 years later, many find that independence is no longer safe or viable. The loss of independence seniors face can often result in grieving, frustration, and other emotional upset. Caregivers can help seniors by understanding the process.

Types of Independence Seniors May Lose

As seniors' bodies and/or minds degenerate, they can experience a variety of types of losses. Their independence can be impacted in ways that change their lifestyles and even their understanding of the world.

Some types of independence seniors may lose include:

- Mobility
- Ability to live alone
- Memory
- Comprehension/decision-making skills
- Strength to perform daily tasks
- Energy to clean or cook
- Social life
- Sight
- Hearing

(Senior Advice)

What to Make Accessible to Seniors with Mobility Limitations



TV remote or computer



A telephone



Basic contact sheet



A calendar or schedule



Reading or entertainment materials



Medication

Common Emotions Seniors May Experience

Loss of independence is an emotional experience for many seniors. They may experience and exhibit normal emotions like:

- Denial
- Irritability
- Frustration
- Anxiety
- Guilt
- Sadness

(My Ageing Parent)

SENIORS COPING WITH LOSS OF INDEPENDENCE



Senior Independence

How to Help Seniors Cope with Increased Dependency

Relying on other people's assistance for basic tasks like bathing or common activities like driving can be frightening and frustrating for seniors. With the loss of independence, seniors also tend to lose some control over their schedule, freedom, preferences, and more.

Caregivers can help make decreased independence more bearable using strategies like these:



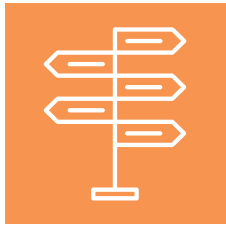
Maintain a Standard of Dignity

Requiring assistance with activities like bathing or shopping does not mean that seniors need to give up their dignity. Caregivers should always guard seniors' privacy. It is also wise to use the terms a senior does when referencing body parts, activities, or even hygiene products.



Offer Reminders That You Can Be Counted On

Depending on other people for help, especially with essential tasks, requires trust. This can cause seniors anxiety and stress. Remind a nervous senior that he or she is in good hands and is being taken care of to assuage their fears.



Give Options for Caregiving

Since dependence requires trust and can be very personal in nature, it is important for seniors to have choices. Learn if a senior prefers same-sex caregivers, certain routines, etc.



Ask Instead of Telling

Caregiving for someone who has lost a type of independence is a supportive role, not a leading role. Caregivers should ask seniors about their preferences, needs, etc., instead of telling them. For example, if a senior cannot cook for themselves, a caregiver should ask for input for meal planning.



Stay Organized and Consistent

Dependence means a loss of control. Seniors have to wait on others for assistance, which can be stressful. Caregivers should remain consistent in their routine so that seniors don't need to be anxious about when or how their care will be provided. Organize necessary materials so they are accessible to seniors who cannot mobilize independently as well.



Home Care Tip:

Many seniors fear losing their independence more than they fear death. Realizing this fear can lead to depression in seniors. Know the symptoms of depression and help seniors get medical care if they exhibit signs of this mental illness.

(NCBI)