



November 2011

# Turning Resistance Into Cooperation - How to Have a Smooth “Day of Thanks”

As the holidays approach and our aging family members come to town or we go for our visits, I would like to offer a few tips on communication to help turn resistance into cooperation. I’m sure the title caught your eye as you were thinking of your teenage child, your spouse or maybe an aging family member with dementia.

As you thought of your aging family member, your second thought may have been, “that can’t be done!” I want to remind you of the ways you found by trial and error to get your toddler to cooperate – including giving them acceptable choices. This is one of my *Eight Steps to Avoiding Resistance with an Aging Family Member*; read on for more.

1. For best results with a loved one with dementia, offer choices, but not too many. With the toddler you asked, “Do you want to wear your yellow or blue jacket?” But not, “Do you want to wear a jacket?” With an elder who might have a dementia, you could ask, “Would you like apple juice or water?” Do not ask if he or she wants a drink (especially when hydration is an issue).

2. The key to cooperation is how you communicate. I try to be respectful and not “bossy.” The family member who comes across as bossy is often met with resistance and sometimes anger. We must remember to speak clearly and slowly and not be in a hurry. Leave yourself plenty of time to get a task accomplished. If your request increases agitation, leave and come back later. However, we need to be aware that individuals with a dementia might have trouble understanding language or finding the right words. When this happens, visual cues may help.

3. The best time to introduce the event for which you need cooperation is when someone is in a good mood. Use creative ways to entice and introduce the action



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you believe is needed. When you want Mom to brush her teeth and she resists– it might be the time to bring flowers or a new picture into the bathroom and tell her you want her opinion on it. While there, you put the toothpaste on the brush and say, “While we’re in here, let’s brush our teeth so we don’t have to do it later.”

Those with dementias often resist any new social situation. Even those who are socially appropriate in a new setting may fear they will make a mistake or not remember someone they should. They avoid this by just declining invitations. Fear of failure keeps many individuals from going to classes or senior center activities. In actuality, the day care programs designed for those with special needs or dementia have creative programming and techniques to avoid individuals feeling like they failed.

If you want a person to attend a day care program – taking them to the program could be introduced as a new place for lunch. You can also go and enjoy the day. Often the first time will only last two to four hours, even if the program may run longer. Most of the time, if you ask if they want to go, the answer will be “no.” However, after four to six visits, they become comfortable with the predictable, non-frustrating program and come to “enjoy the moment,” giving family caregivers a well-deserved break. It is all in the approach. Sometimes, providing what the person needs or wants – help with their memory or help recovering from a stroke – makes them more willing to go.

Occasionally, resistance happens because we are asking too much of the individual and we need to back away from things they could do a few weeks ago and find replacements for those activities.

One area I found that overwhelms many individuals is when they are served full plates of food or given a tray with multiple dishes and many utensils. This results in confusion and refusal to eat causing great concern to the family or retirement community. So, to get cooperation for those who start to resist eating – serve small portions, one at a time, and give only the utensil that is needed to eat that food.

As you can see from the examples in this newsletter, creativity, respecting dignity and not asking individuals to do what they can no longer do produces ease and cooperation. If you would like a complete list of the *Eight Steps to Avoiding Resistance with an Aging Family Member*, please call Lindsay Freeman at (925) 937-2018 or email her at [LindsayF@EldercareAnswers.com](mailto:LindsayF@EldercareAnswers.com).

If all your creative approaches fail, ask an in-law to try for cooperation. Research shows that in-laws have much more influence in getting cooperation than adult children. Also, we professionals can get a “yes” from a parent where you have been getting resistance – just because we are not the “child”!

Geriatric Care Managers help families find creative ways to get cooperation. If you’re stuck with a resistance, give us a call and/or attend one of our classes to help you gain some new tools to ease your path as a family caregiver.

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*Eldercare Services provides Counseling, Support Groups, Home Care and Care Management to aid Family Caregivers. If you or someone you know could benefit from self-care, give us a call at (866) 760-1808 or email us at [Info@EldercareAnswers.com](mailto:Info@EldercareAnswers.com).*

Eldercare Services works with Seniors and their families in Walnut Creek, Alameda County, San Francisco and the Tri-Valley, CA. Visit us on the web at <http://www.EldercareAnswers.com> for more

## **Community Classes**

### **Walnut Creek**

### **What You Need to Know About Dementia But Were Afraid to Ask**

**3rd Friday of every month from 10 AM to Noon**

1808 Tice Valley Blvd., Walnut Creek, CA 94595

**Class Registration: Please call at least 3 days  
ahead**

## **Support Groups**

When concerns for aging family members are part of every day life, or when they interfere with work, your health or other relationships, you need to join a support group.

### **Caring for An Aging Family Member**

**2nd Thursday of every month from 7 to 8:30 PM**

1808 Tice Valley Blvd., **Walnut Creek**, CA 94595

**1st Tuesday of every month from 6 to 7:30 PM**

605 A Chenery St., **San Francisco**, CA 94131



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Services*  
*Advocacy, Care, and Education*

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