

Support

Caring better together

at home

Dear Support At Home

I live in Auckland and my elderly parents live in Southland.

They are still very independent, but their home and garden are becoming too much for them, and my sister and I can't keep racing down to assist with the latest crisis.

We both have families and mortgages and work full-time.

Our parents just hate the idea of 'outside' help coming into their home, even though this has been offered.

I think we almost need a script about how to talk to mum and dad about our concerns (see my list!) as they just don't want to face their need for more help.

This must be a common concern for middle aged people like us whose elderly loved ones are still living at home.

Do you have any advice?

1 We wish they would accept paid help around their home and garden. They have ignored our hints and little chats about this, so we need to have a full-on conversation about it, which we're dreading! How should we approach it?

2 How would we go about finding a trustworthy, reliable, friendly person(s) to help them? Should we use an agency, or should we find someone privately? If our parents accept the government-funded help



they have been offered, who organises people to do the work? If we want to pay privately for extra assistance, can we use the same people, and what would this help cost?

3 Our 90 year old dad had a stroke several years ago, and our 88 year old mum has to provide considerable help. She is getting frail herself. We worry that she's either going to hurt

herself or have a major health episode. This could spell the end of their time at home, as dad could not live independently without mum.

We have lots of other questions but these are our main worries. It would be great to know who to talk to, and how to raise these tricky issues with mum and dad.

DAVID, PAPAURA

LETTERS & ADVICE!

Family Care often receives letters and emails from support workers and those receiving help at home about issues they want to share with others.

Do you have a Burning Question or issue for our Support At Home team? Post them to PO Box 133, Mangonui, Far North 0442, or email them to info@carers.net.nz

The answer to our Burning Question was provided by Access staff, who provide care and support to help clients across New Zealand maintain independent lifestyles.

Access staff connect with elderly people in the community all the time.

We have found that some are initially reluctant to have home health care support, even though they still want to live in their own home, and they do need assistance.

However, once the 'outside' support has been underway for a few weeks, most people stop seeing it as an intrusion, and are usually very grateful for the help.

Unfortunately, as you are experiencing with your parents, the tricky part is getting their initial acceptance to try it.

While home health care providers like Access cannot offer assistance with gardens, we can certainly help with household tasks.

Grey Power or Age Concern usually have a list of suitable people to help in the garden, or you may be able to get assistance through Work and Income (to learn about the Disability Allowance, phone 0800 777 797 to request a free Carer Infopack from Carers NZ).

When broaching the topic of assistance with your parents, focus on the positives: what they can do, and that they want to continue living independently in their home.

Tell them this is where you are coming from too.

Discuss how you feel it can be a struggle to manage with housework and gardens, as well as your mother helping your father since his stroke.

Together you could identify the tasks that are difficult and time consuming, and that drain your parents' energy.

Getting help for these tasks means they can spend more time and energy on what they *do* enjoy, or would like to do more of if only they could.

To break the ice, you could suggest a visit from a home care provider's community nurse, which can usually be arranged with no obligation or cost (should you decide to continue, a setup fee will usually be charged to whoever pays the invoice).

Having this conversation with a friendly, supportive health professional can help to reinforce the benefits to your parents.

Having a friend or a neighbour at this

meeting might also be reassuring for them.

The community nurse would assure your parents that support workers are trained, police vetted, and supported by a registered nurse, who is only a phone call away in case there is a decline in their health. Additionally, there are no worries about annual leave and sick leave, because the support worker will be replaced with a reliever.

There are two options for getting support worker assistance.

Your parents' GP can refer them to a Needs Assessment Service Coordination (NASC) service, which would assess whether home health care support can be funded by their local DHB. Or, you can approach a home health care company directly on a user pays basis for all of the support, or as a top up to any government-funded assistance.

Whichever option applies, the home care organisation you choose will arrange for the household assistance to be undertaken by support workers on a regular basis, so you do not need to worry about day to day organisation.

111 REMINDER!

Recently I had an experience while minding my four grandchildren that highlighted the importance of everyone, even young children, knowing how to use the 111 telephone emergency service. I injured my lower leg one day after bumping into an object in the garage.



This caused a gaping wound on my shin and severed an artery. I knew I could lose consciousness at any time and, as we live in the country, that help was at least 15 minutes away. Fortunately my 10 year old grandchild and I managed, between us, to apply enough pressure to the wound to slow the bleeding until the ambulance arrived. The response to a 111 call can be confusing to anyone who does not realise that you have to choose between three emergency services (Fire, Ambulance, or Police) and to provide location details in the midst of what, in our case, looked like a crime scene! I am a very fit 74 year old, but my experience shows that anything

can happen to anyone at any moment ... and you may not be in familiar surroundings with near neighbours to assist. It was estimated that I had lost a litre and a half of blood in a very short time. Mine would have been a life-threatening situation had we not been able to stop my bleeding. Perhaps our little drama will encourage others to be aware of what information will be required should a 111 emergency service be required: clear directions to your location, and knowing to ask for Fire, Ambulance, or Police! Thank you for a great and helpful magazine.

Rae Patten, Palmerston North

Our Support At Home sponsor is Access, one of New Zealand's leading health care organisations, specialising in home-based health care and support for New Zealand families since 1927!

Going the Extra Mile

Supporting people to live independently in their own homes is rewarding for Access staff, whose efforts are genuinely valued by clients.

When you are dedicated to providing the care and support to help others live safely and independently in the community, it's easy to go the extra mile.

Small, everyday things that really make a difference come naturally to those who provide support to clients in their homes.

It is observation and attention to detail that often means the most, those hidden things done on a daily basis that push beyond the usual boundaries of help.

Access often receives feedback from clients about support workers who 'go the extra mile' to help them.

Genuine support

In one case it had been noticed that a client with an intellectual disability had dramatically lost 10 kilos over a three month period after developing poor eating habits.

His support worker put in extra time and effort, teaching good food choices and meal preparation that ultimately helped the client to regain the weight, and continue living in a healthy and safe environment



Access client Janet Glue enjoying a walk with support worker Geraldine Barnes.

on his own. Another client, who was having difficulties with her mattress, was delighted when her support worker (who noticed a warranty) contacted the manufacturer and organised the delivery of a new one.

It is the ability to think, react, respond and use the best skills in a time of need that can mean the world to clients maintaining their independence at home.

Peace of mind

In some areas night runs have been put in place, where support workers (often in isolated rural communities) ensure clients are safe, their properties are secure, and meals have been eaten before turning in.

ACCESS SUPPORT WORKERS PROVIDE A BROAD RANGE OF PERSONAL CARE SERVICES, ANYTHING FROM DRESSING, BATHING AND GROOMING, TO HELPING CLIENTS GET IN AND OUT OF BED. THEY CAN ALSO ASSIST WITH CLEANING, COOKING, SHOPPING, AND CHILD CARE!

VALUED SUPPORT

"We have found the support worker help has been above and beyond anything we could wish for," says Graham and Jean Stanaway of Access support worker Cynthia.

"Her cheerful, helpful nature is a real blessing to us, and the kind of start to the day that we both need and really appreciate."

"Most of the time employers hear only the bad news, but in this instance you really do have 'one out of the box', and both my wife and I would like to record our great satisfaction with her."