

5 WAYS TO EMOTIONALLY SUPPORT YOUR PARENT

As your parent ages, family dynamics often shift. You worry about them and just want to help, while they often feel their independence and autonomy slipping away.

Here are five important ways you can respond to how your parent is feeling and maintain a healthy relationship.

1. LISTEN ACTIVELY

Take their concerns seriously, and be an advocate for them. A continuous and clear dialogue empowers your aging parent to make decisions with confidence.

2. BE RESPECTFUL

Make sure they feel valued, acknowledged, and recognized. They could be facing frustrating physical and mental challenges, so strive to be patient and compassionate. Consider how you would want to be treated if the roles were reversed.

3. OFFER HELP

No one wants to feel like a burden, so let them know you enjoy helping them. Let them know you still need them, too, and remind them of the ways they continue to contribute to your happiness.

4. HELP THEM FEEL IN CONTROL

Older adults highly value a sense of independence and autonomy. Avoid pointing out age-related difficulties as it can make them feel defensive. Instead of dictating what they should do, offer choices and involve them in decisions based on their values.

5. BE POSITIVE

Maintain a positive mindset and encourage them to participate in activities that bring them joy. Encourage exercise and socializing. Suggest they start a gratitude journal, or do gratitude exercises together.

By focusing on the root cause of your parents' feelings and needs, you can arrive at decisions that will improve your relationship and ensure a good quality of life.

