

# AUTONOMY AND INDEPENDENCE IN OLD AGE

Elizabeth Lewis  
Director of  
Human Services  
St.Lucia

# AUTONOMY AND INDEPENDENCE

It is presumed that all adults have the ability to make decisions and therefore, they are afforded the right to make decisions for themselves in all areas of their lives.

- Should older persons continue to enjoy that right???

# AUTONOMY AND INDEPENDENCE

The issue of autonomy and independence is one that poses a challenge for our elderly as many of us think it is easier to do for them rather than take the time to engage them and allowing them to do for themselves.

# AUTONOMY AND INDEPENDENCE

## Self-Determination Theory

### Competence

need to be effective in dealing with environment

### Humans' three basic needs

### Autonomy

need to control the course of their lives

### Relatedness

need to have a close, affectionate relationships with others

# AUTONOMY AND INDEPENDENCE

- Recognizing some of the challenges that come with the ageing process, the true issue therefore is;

“Do we do for them, or do we support them”



# AUTONOMY AND INDEPENDENCE

- Should we allow older persons to make decisions on where they want to live.
- Should we allow older persons to decide which doctor they want to visit.
- Should we allow older persons to decide what food they want to eat
- Should we allow them to decide what shoe they want to wear.

# AUTONOMY AND INDEPENDENCE

- Balancing risk and autonomy can be difficult from professional standpoint and as a family member.
- The more autonomy that the older person has, the better off they will be.

# AUTONOMY AND INDEPENDENCE

How do we balance the risk?

COMMUNICATION!

COMMUNICATION!

COMMUNICATION!



# AUTONOMY AND INDEPENDENCE

- Older person must be communicated to in a respectful manner
- They must be provided with accurate and complete information.
- Their thoughts, feeling and ideas need to be form part of decisions that impact them.

# AUTONOMY AND INDEPENDENCE

- Information must be provided in an appropriate format and language.
- It should also be in a supportive and sensitive manner.

# AUTONOMY AND INDEPENDENCE

## IT'S THEIR LIFE

We need to find the right balance.

Taking risks is natural and yes our elderly may make the wrong decision but good things happen when the elderly live autonomous lives.