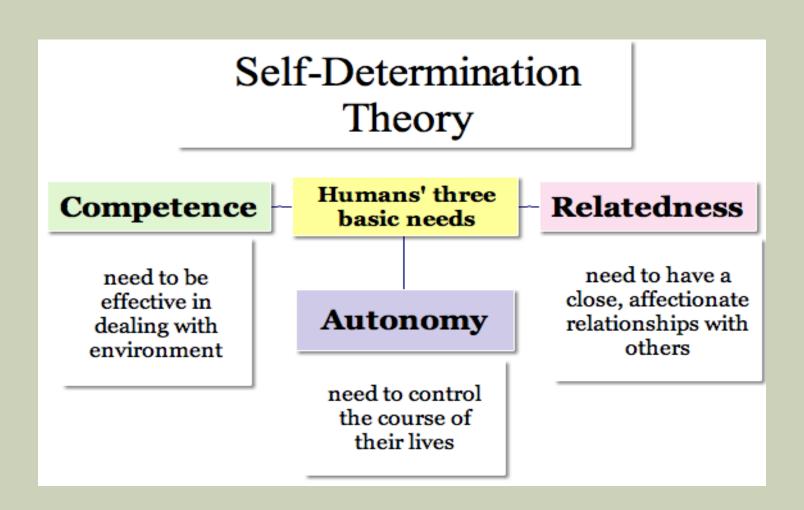
AUTONOMY AND INDEPENDENCE IN OLD AGE

Elizabeth Lewis
Director of
Human Services
St.Lucia

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???

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 that take the time to engage them and allowing them to do for themselves.



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"



- 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.

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.

How do we balance the risk?

COMMUNICATION!

COMMUNICATION!

COMMUNICATION!

- 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.

Information must be provided in an appropriate format and language.

■ It should also be in a supportive and sensitive manner.

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.