



DIGNITY OF RISK

What is Dignity of Risk?

Dignity of risk is the right to live life in a way you choose, even with risk. It recognizes that daily life is uncertain and that taking some risks **can lead to positive outcomes** in your quality of life, health and well-being.

Why is Dignity of Risk important to older adults?

Most older adults want to keep their independence and make their own choices instead of being “kept safe”. Even if they are living with frailty (a state in older adults that makes it harder to recover after getting sick) or dementia, older adults should be supported to live on their own terms as much as possible.

Barriers to Dignity of Risk



Our Own Worries

can make us want to do things for older adults to help them avoid risks. But there are benefits from taking certain risks in daily life. After all, it is their life.



Ageism

is a false belief that older adults cannot or should not do something because they are too old or cannot make their own choices. It can also lead to discrimination against older adults, “*just because they are old*”.



Being Overprotective

or treating older adults like they are fragile can hurt more than help them. When we try too hard to protect older adults from all possible harms, we can end up taking away small freedoms and choices that mean a lot to them.



Focusing too much on safety

can lead to taking away older adults’ meaningful activities. This can harm their quality of life and independence. For example, preventing a person from walking or moving around because you worry they may fall.

How can we support older adults?

- Asking what matters most to them
- Understanding why they make certain choices
- Focusing first on the good things that can happen from taking a risk
- Helping them find ways to lower possible harms while supporting positive risk-taking

Note: If another person’s safety is a concern, we may have to be more cautious, but we can try to identify and lower possible harms while still supporting the older adult’s dignity of risk as much as possible.