

Aging Parent Dependency and Family Impact Checklist

A clinical conversation guide for aging parents and families

Purpose: This checklist helps organize a conversation about increasing dependence, family burden, remaining capacity, and the sustainability of current arrangements. It is not a validated diagnostic instrument and does not determine incapacity or a specific diagnosis.

Instructions

Complete the checklist based on the past three months. When appropriate, the aging parent and involved family members may each complete a separate copy and then compare patterns rather than argue about a single total score.

0	1	2	3	4
Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Almost always

#	Statement	0	1	2	3	4
1	My aging parent relies on me for tasks that they could still complete independently.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2	Requests for help have increased in frequency, urgency, or scope.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3	I feel responsible for preventing my parent from experiencing discomfort, disappointment, or loneliness.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4	My parent resists reasonable alternatives that would reduce reliance on me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5	I have difficulty distinguishing genuine need from preference, habit, or expectation.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6	Current patterns may be reducing my parent's remaining independence or confidence.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7	Caregiving demands interfere with my work, health, sleep, relationships, or other responsibilities.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8	Other family members and I disagree about what help is necessary or who should provide it.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9	I feel guilt, resentment, anxiety, or anger about the amount of help expected from me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10	My parent reacts with criticism, withdrawal, pressure, or distress when I set a limit.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11	I conceal the extent of the caregiving burden or minimize its effect on me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12	The present arrangement depends too heavily on one person and may not be sustainable.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
13	There are unresolved concerns about falls, driving, medication, finances, nutrition, or self-neglect.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14	Memory, judgment, mood, or behavior changes may require professional assessment.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15	I feel ambivalent: part of me wants change, while another part fears what change would mean.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
16	I am willing to discuss one specific boundary, support, or next step with my family or a qualified professional.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Clinical Review

Use the responses to locate patterns, differences in perspective, and the next clinically appropriate conversation.

1. Review by domain

Domain	Items	Clinical focus
Dependency pattern	Items 1-6	Look for expanding reliance, difficulty tolerating discomfort, resistance to alternatives, unclear need, and possible erosion of remaining independence.
Family impact	Items 7-12	Look for burden, unequal responsibility, guilt or resentment, conflict around limits, concealment, and an arrangement that may not be sustainable.
Safety and change	Items 13-16	Address concrete safety or cognitive concerns, ambivalence, and readiness for one boundary, support, or next step.

2. Interpretation

This checklist intentionally has no diagnostic cutoff. A total score can obscure the most important information. Review which individual items were marked Often or Almost always, where family members differ, and whether the pattern indicates safety risk, declining capacity, coercion, caregiver overload, or a need for medical, legal, or social-service assessment.

Clinical caution: Any concern involving falls, unsafe driving, medication errors, financial exploitation, wandering, self-neglect, abuse, or inability to meet basic needs warrants direct assessment. Urgent danger should be addressed through appropriate emergency, medical, protective, or legal resources.

3. Discussion prompts

- Which response concerns you most, and why?
- Which forms of help are essential, and which may have become habitual?
- What can the aging parent still do independently or with limited support?
- Where do family members' ratings or expectations differ most?
- What change would make the arrangement more sustainable?
- What is one observable next step that protects both safety and autonomy?

4. Notes and next step

Primary concern:

Difference in family members' perspectives:

Immediate safety consideration:

Agreed next step:

Follow-up date: