

# Rebalancing Power

Recognize power imbalances between service providers and older women

## Cultural and Institutional Authority:

Service providers often embody the institutional authority of the organizations they represent, which can be intimidating.

## Communication:

Technical jargon, acronyms and professional language can be difficult to understand and create barriers to connection.

## Decision-Making Authority:

When service providers 'know best' and unilaterally make decisions, older women may feel that they must meet certain expectations or conform to receive the help they need.

## Knowledge and Expertise:

Formal education and expertise can be intimidating, especially for generations of women raised to respect and defer to authority.

## Social and Economic Power:

Older women experience compounded power imbalances from other forms of discrimination such as classism, ableism, racism, homophobia etc. These intersecting factors deepen marginalization and undermine agency and self-worth.

**It takes  
awareness  
and care to  
REBALANCE  
POWER:**

- Be mindful about how you use your authority and status.
- Value different kinds of knowledge including life experience and oral traditions.
- Listen for the incredible ways that women keep themselves safe in dangerous situations.
- Reflect those strengths back.
- Take time to make a genuine connection so that you can really listen and learn.
- Use your power to make the system work for 'this' person in the best way possible.

*"Most people recognize when they don't have power and less often when they do."*

Julie Diamond. *Power: A User's Guide*

