

Your Parents' Phone Problems Aren't About the Phone

A simple 20-minute setup can reduce frustration and make a phone easier to use.

Based on an article by Kim Komando, July 21, 2026

What is this about?

Family members often become the unofficial tech support person for a parent, spouse, or friend. The calls may be about a screen that is too small, a missing text message, or an unfamiliar app on the Home screen.

The phone itself may not be the real problem. The person may simply have no one nearby to ask for help.

Why does this matter?

A few simple changes can make a phone easier to read, easier to navigate, and safer to use.

Spending about 20 minutes setting up the phone can prevent many repeated problems and help the owner stay more independent.

Set the phone up so it helps

1. Make the text larger

On an iPhone, go to Settings > Display & Brightness > Text Size, then drag the slider to the right.

On Android, go to Settings > Display > Font size.

Tip: Increase the text only as much as needed. Very large text can cause some buttons or words to move off the screen.

2. Simplify the Home screen

Remove apps the owner never uses.

Put the most important apps where they are easy to find:

- Phone
- Messages
- Camera
- Photos
- Favorite contacts

Keep the first Home screen simple. Too many icons can make it harder to find the right app.

3. Complete the emergency information

On an iPhone, use Medical ID in the Health app.

On Android, use the Personal Safety app or the phone's emergency information settings.

Include important information such as:

- Medical conditions
- Medications
- Allergies

- Emergency contacts

Remember: Check that emergency information can be viewed from the Lock screen without unlocking the phone.

4. Turn on scam-call filtering

On an iPhone, go to Settings > Apps > Phone > Silence Unknown Callers.

On Android, open the Phone app > three dots > Settings > Spam and Call Screen, then turn on the spam filter.

Remember: Call filtering can also silence legitimate calls from numbers that are not saved. Check voicemail regularly and save important contacts.

5. Add important people to Favorites

On an iPhone, open Phone > Favorites > plus sign, then select the person.

On Android, open Phone, select the contact, then tap the star.

This makes it possible to call a trusted person with one tap instead of searching through the entire Contacts list.

What to do next

Sit beside the phone's owner and make these changes together.

Let the owner practice each task:

- Make a call from Favorites
- Send a text message
- Open the Camera
- Find a recent photo
- Check voicemail

Key Takeaway

Many phone problems are really support problems.

A simpler screen, larger text, emergency information, scam filtering, and easy access to trusted contacts can reduce frustration and help someone use a phone with more confidence.