

## Having the Conversation

---

Having the actual conversation may be a little difficult. Even if your family has strong relationships, the subject matter can lead to feelings of fear and apprehension. Sometimes it even opens the door for difficult and emotionally charged questions. But with patience and thoughtful communication, you can work together to find a positive solution for everyone.

Here are a few tips on what to do during the conversation to help it go smoothly:

### **Timing is everything.**

If you've ever had to talk about a sensitive subject, you know that timing is everything. You don't want to dive into a deep conversation while someone is distracted. With that in mind, make sure you plan to bring up the topic of senior living when everyone is fully present and able to focus on each other. It's also wise to make sure everyone is in a good mood and has plenty of time to engage in the conversation.

### **Lead with your observations and concerns.**

This applies to both parties: the senior parent and the adult children. No matter which side of the conversation you're on, it's important to lead with your observations and concerns from a place of love and understanding. Don't charge through with accusations or fear, but address your family member with the reasons why you think it might be time to consider senior living.

For parents speaking to their children, this might look like sharing some of the concerns you have about living on your own in the coming years. Perhaps you are more worried about falling, maintaining the house, or addressing your increasing healthcare needs.

For children talking to their parents, it's important to emphasize how much you love them and want them to be as happy and healthy as possible. You can share some examples of situations that have led you to the conclusion that it might be time for them to transition to community life.

### **Make a point to listen.**

One of the best things you can do during this conversation, whether you are the child or parent, is to actively listen. Once you've finished sharing your thoughts, give the other person space to respond or ask questions. And as they talk, avoid the temptation to interrupt. Even if they disagree or see things differently, listening shows respect, and that's a crucial ingredient for a successful outcome.

**Make a plan.**

If you're the child talking to your aging parent, you should go into the conversation knowing you will most likely end up having this discussion multiple times before arriving at a decision. But that doesn't mean you should leave the conversation open-ended without creating some kind of action plan.

A few examples of action items include scheduling a follow-up conversation with your parent after they've had some time to think about moving, visiting our community together so your mom or dad can see what community life is like, or looping in another trusted family member or friend who can provide another perspective to the situation.

If you're a parent talking to your child, you probably want to give your loved ones a chance to process what you've told them. But that doesn't mean you should press pause on your plans to move forward.

You can be kind and understanding if your kids aren't convinced that you should move while also letting them know that you are going to move forward with your decision. Let them know what the next steps look like and how you plan to go about making the transition. Depending on their reactions, you may even want to ask for their advice and involvement along the way.