

## It Starts with a Conversation...

Are you worried about having “the talk” with an elder about his or her future? Here are some tips on how to start.

**Talk with other family members first.** Give everyone a chance to discuss his or her concerns so that you all agree on the need for the conversation.

**Decide who should be there.** You may or may not want to include other family members, such as siblings. A favorite family member may help ease the tension, but having too many people may feel overwhelming. The elder’s doctor can also help you begin the conversation.

**Be prepared.** What issues do you want to talk about? If you are proposing a solution to something, do your homework and come with the necessary information.

**Find a comfortable place and time.** Where does the elder like to relax—at the dinner table, in the garden, or on a walk? It may be helpful to start the conversation there.

**Introduce the topic by talking about an article, television show, or a friend** whose parent may be having a similar problem. The elder will be reminded that he or she is not the only person whose life is changing.

**Don’t assume that you are the only one who needs to talk.** You may be surprised that the elder is relieved to start the conversation.

**Start with small steps, small decisions, and small changes.** If you are worried about the elder’s health, safety, or cleanliness, focus on that particular issue. Don’t overwhelm the elder.

**It’s a conversation, not a lecture.** Seek the elder’s input and listen to his or her perspective. Be patient. Discuss solutions together.

**Respect the elder’s feelings and concerns.** The elder may deny that there is a problem. Be supportive and sympathetic. Arguing will just make it worse.

**Suggest a follow-up conversation.** It’s a lot to take in at once. Give the elder—and yourself—time to think about the options.

**End the conversation on a good note.** You have made progress just by getting the issues out in the open.