

IMPORTANT THINGS TO DISCUSS WITH Your Aging Loved Ones



Prepared by:





Lately your elderly parents seem to be having some trouble keeping up with the simple tasks they've done every day of their lives. You think it might be time to talk to them about finding some additional help, but you don't know the best way to broach the subject. Your parents have always been so strong-willed and independent that you're uncertain whether they will be receptive to your concerns. If you are nervous about talking to your loved one about long-term care, you're not alone.

Millions of Americans are personally providing care for their aging parents and relatives while keeping up with their other responsibilities. Often, family caregivers recognize they need help, but think they should be able to do it all on their own, or they may be hesitant to trust someone else for assistance. They may feel that depending on outside help is letting their parents down. However, you should know additional assistance may help your parents maintain their independence and health.

It can be difficult for elderly parents to face the realization that they need help. Taking that first step to talk with your loved ones is important. Many independent seniors will be more comfortable asking a professional caregiver for assistance with certain tasks than their son or daughter. This guide gives tips on when and how you should talk with your parents about their long-term care needs, as well as other changes that may be necessary as they get older.

SIGNS IT'S TIME TO TALK ABOUT GETTING HELP

Whenever you visit your aging parents (*or other elderly relatives*), be on the lookout for the following signs that they may need help:

Pay Attention to the Condition of Their Home

Is it more messy and cluttered than usual? Are household items being put away in the right places? What is the condition of food kept in the refrigerator? Are bills being paid on time?

All these can be signs that your loved one is no longer able to keep up with the normal tasks of life, and could use some help, even if it is just having someone around for a couple hours to help with household chores.

Look at Their Personal Condition

Pay attention to their hygiene, health and clothing. Are they brushing their teeth and changing their clothes on a daily basis? Do they bathe or shower regularly? Have they lost any weight? Do their clothing choices make sense? For example, check to see if your parents are wearing weather-appropriate clothing.

If you begin to notice any problems, then it may be time to look for some help. Some care providers specialize in helping elders look and feel their best when they are unable to manage their hygiene on their own. Hiring someone to help your elderly parents can go a long way in helping them feel strong and independent as they age.

Are They Showing Signs of Confusion and Forgetfulness?

Are they missing doctor's appointments, forgetting to take medications, or failing to attend favorite social activities, such as bowling leagues or religious services?

Are they confused when you chat with them about topics they would normally understand?

Signs of confusion and forgetfulness can often be the most concerning. Forgetting to do important things, such as eating regular meals or taking medications, can lead to serious problems for your loved one. Hiring a caregiver who can help your loved one follow a daily schedule can be one of the greatest things you can do for them.

If you see any of the signs listed above, then you should speak with your loved one about getting help. Remember that long-term care doesn't have to be full-time, and that with a little extra help your loved one may be able to maintain independence longer.



HOW TO EFFECTIVELY COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR LOVED ONE

It can be difficult to know what to say and how to approach your elderly parents about the sensitive topic of long-term care. Although we all have good intentions when it comes to talking with our loved ones, the conversation may not go smoothly.

For instance, your loved ones may feel as if they are a burden, or that you no longer care about them. However, they may not realize that you are simply trying to find the most comfortable, safe and efficient way to meet their needs.

Here are some ideas on how to effectively communicate with your loved one:

Be Proactive

The sooner you bring it up, the better. You want to be proactive instead of reactive. Often, families wait too long. Then, an illness or injury forces them to seek the appropriate care for their loved one within a limited amount of time. This stressful situation can be avoided by exploring the choices available before a crisis occurs.

Be Open

Before approaching your parents or loved ones, let them know of your desire to discuss this topic. Remember this is not an intervention; you all want what is best for your loved ones. Let them know you love them and would like to talk about their future.

Be Prepared

Be sure to do research before you talk with them, and have a clear idea of what you

want to say. Prioritize the topics that you feel are most important to discuss. When doing research, be sure to consider a variety of options. If your loved one has concerns about accepting care, reassure them this additional assistance will help them be more independent, and provide more time to enjoy life.

Utilizing home care services to help with activities of daily living, such as light housekeeping, meal preparation, bathing and other services, may help elderly adults remain in their homes longer. This makes home care an effective solution for loved ones who prefer to remain at home. These services can even help enhance their quality of life.

Listen to Their Needs

As you consider the options together, be sure to take your loved ones' preferences into account. Listen to them and consider their priorities. Express your concerns in a loving manner, and use persuasion rather than arguments. Remember conversations may not always go smoothly. If so, try again on another day.

IS IT STILL SAFE FOR MOM AND DAD TO DRIVE?

The topic of driving may be just as important as talking to your parents about long-term care. This is because driving is a very tangible sign of independence, and also affects the safety of themselves and others.

Below are some tips on how to talk to your aging loved ones about driving:

Be Sensitive to Their Feelings

Put yourself in their shoes and tread carefully. Be honest and open. Make the discussion about safety and your concern for them and others.

Pay Attention to Their Health

Vision or hearing losses, decreased mobility or cognitive decline are conditions that can greatly affect your loved ones' ability to drive safely in various situations and road conditions. Make sure your loved ones get regular health checkups to monitor any significant changes in their health conditions.

Get a Second Opinion

If your loved ones aren't convinced there is a problem, encourage them to talk to someone that they trust such as their physician, a close friend or another relative. If you have noticed warning signs that your parent or loved one should not be on the road, consider getting a professional evaluation of driving skills from a driver certification specialist. If necessary, contact your state department of motor vehicles, safety or transportation office to discuss concerns or notify them about an unsafe driver.

Offer Alternatives

Once you have agreed that your parent/s will no longer be driving, be sure to find alternative forms of transportation for errands, appointments and activities. This could include public transportation or family members could offer to drive them around occasionally. Another possibility would be to hire a caregiver to provide transportation and other assistance needed in the home.

By remaining sensitive to your loved ones' point of view and involving them in decisions, your chances of having constructive conversations with your parents or loved ones can improve.

PARENTING OUR PARENTS

The most important thing you can do is show your parents that you love them and value them. Although they may depend on you more now, they still want to feel like your parents. You can do this by spending time with them and respecting their opinions and preferences.

When our older loved ones are not physically able to get around as well, they tend to

remain in the safety and familiarity of their own homes. However, staying socially engaged with friends and family members is important to their physical and mental health. Make time to do favorite activities together, such as going to the movies, playing cards and sharing family stories. Simply taking a walk in the park with your elderly loved ones can inspire wonderful conversations that will uplift everyone.



Knowing what signs to look for and how to approach your aging loved ones will prepare you to help them with this next phase of their lives. Once you have decided to get some additional help, where can you find it?

ComForCare and At Your Side Home Care are here to help you with whatever challenges you may face. Our mission is to improve the quality of life and level of independence for every client and family receiving our services. We provide in-home care services for as little as a few hours a week to around the clock, every day and in any setting you call home.

If you or your elderly parents need some additional assistance to help you live your best life possible, call today to set up an in-home evaluation.

800-886-4044

