



How to have constructive conversations

Given that your parent is probably aware that they are “slipping” and that their world is narrowing, discussions about their future are likely to be laden with emotion. ***More than anything, you will need to approach these talks with compassion and understanding.*** Here are some further suggestions for beginning the conversation:

✓ Don't delay

The optimal time to broach the subject is as soon as you notice something's “different” about mom or dad—before things begin to decline even further or a crisis situation arises.

✓ Have a plan

Now is not the time to improvise. It's important to consider the things you wish to discuss with your parent in advance. Rehearse or even “role play” what you will say and how you'll bring up certain topics. Come prepared with key points to raise, and ask yourself in advance what you wish to gain from the conversation. Try to anticipate how your parent will react and how you'll respond to each possible scenario.

✓ Enlist family members

Don't go this potentially rough road alone. Join with other family members (your parent's spouse included, if applicable) in formulating a discussion plan ahead of time. It's crucial for everyone to be on the same page and present a united front. It may also be helpful to designate a certain family member as “leader” of conversations, one who can keep the process going and make sure that everyone agrees to and understands it.

✓ Empower your parent

While you're rallying your family team, keep in mind that your parent is the most influential member of the conversation. Listen to them attentively and compassionately; ask them questions about their desires, concerns and fears, while also impressing upon them that a comprehensive plan is essential. Assure them that the entire family is part of the decision process, and you're all in this together.

✓ Be straightforward

Don't complicate things by hiding negative information or "sugarcoating" realities. Be honest and forthcoming about changes, concerns, limitations and possibilities. Be sure to also offer hope in the foundation of your support and strength as a family unit.

✓ Offer to accompany your parent on doctor visits

"Four ears are better than two" is a great rule of thumb for anyone having a medical consultation, particularly an aging loved one. Offer to help your parent schedule doctor or healthcare visits, and commit to attending them with him or her. This may be assuring to your parent as well as helpful in gathering and grasping important information.

✓ Take it in stages

If time allows and you are not in an immediately critical situation, be careful not to overwhelm your parent with too much discussion at once. Respect their wishes to take a break from the topic, while gently stressing that the conversations need to continue. Agree upon an appropriate time and place to meet again before you part ways, and remind your parent ahead of time of your next discussion.



Part III of this series, “Where to Find Reputable Resources,” will help you recognize some traits of a dependable website and provide you with links to trusted local and national organizations.

The Merion is a luxury senior living rental community located in the heart of Evanston, steps away from Northwestern University and the beaches of Lake Michigan. An independent living community with exceptional activities, dining and programming experiences, The Merion boasts an on-site Wellness Center operating 24/7. The Merion’s unique partnership with nearby Symphony of Evanston, which offers rehabilitation, assures that residents can be cared for, when and if their health needs change, within close proximity of their apartment. The Merion is the Preferred Senior Living Community of Northwestern University Athletics.



For additional information, visit
www.MerionEvanston.com or
call 877-379-6576.

THE
Merion

SENIOR LIVING. REDEFINED.



877-379-6576
MerionEvanston.com