



How to Talk To Your Parents



When Discussing Tough Issues!

Presented by Gordon's Downsizing & Estate Services, Courtesy of www.Caring.com

DO SOME HOMEWORK:

Before you say a word, take time to collect some information and research possible solutions, ultimately, the goal is to problem-solve together through dialogue with your parent (not to dictate the solution or to convince through arguments). But if you gather facts first, you'll be able to help in a way that's better informed and less stressful for everyone.

- Moving – Independent/Assisted Living
- In-home Care
- Driving
- Health Issues

Also before you start the conversation, take time to get a sense of whether your parent is open to it. You can do this by first introducing an unthreatening related topic. Stick to the positive and general. Does he or she respond openly? Defensively? Evasively? This will give you important insight into how to proceed.

Even if, in a test-the-waters chat, your parent sounds receptive to discussing a tough issue, it's usually best not to plunge in yet, Robbins says. In this first talk, you just want to float the issue, not problem-solve. You want to show in a respectful way that you can be a helpful, nonjudgmental resource.

TESTING THE WATERS:

Choose The Best Messenger:

What if your parent resists any talk about his or her future? Pause to consider whether this conversation is best had by another party. Robbins says that a neutral third party -- a doctor, a family friend, a cleric -- is often better suited to bring up tricky topics like driving or whether to live independently.

Set The Right Tone:

So you've done some homework and gotten a sense of how ready (or indifferent) your parent is. How do you take the plunge? Plan to start the conversation on a different day from your test-the-waters chat, in person if possible. This feels less threatening and overbearing, and more natural.

Look For An Opening:

The best time to segue into a serious conversation is when your parent brings it up first and asks for your help. Failing that, look for an opportunity when everyone is relaxed. Then take the plunge. Describe what you're seeing.

FOLLOW UP:

Let It Percolate Awhile:

Whatever you do, don't launch an aggressive "sell" on your favourite option the minute you get back home or the next time you talk. Don't push for making a decision right away. Try not even to hint or nag at first.

Be Ready To Continue The Conversation At Any Time:

If your parent mentions the conversation at all, use this as a wedge to revisit the matter in a supportive way. If he or she expresses a concern: Take it as a positive sign that he or she is at least aware of the issue and thinking about it. Go over the facts as well as the solutions again in a nonthreatening way.

If he or she says something negative: Don't fall into an argument. Be patient and try to get at the underlying concern. Is it fear of running out of money? Is it a feeling that admitting help is necessary is also admitting failure of some kind? Look for ways to address and support the concern. Maybe you give a weekly cleaning service as a Mother's Day gift "because I don't know what else to get you and you deserve to be treated like a queen," for example.

Make It Clear That You're Comfortable With Any Decision:

If your parent is of sound mind but just making decisions that you disagree with (not endangering ones), all you can do is continue the conversation in a positive way. Any choices are ultimately his or hers. You may not like the choice, or you may end up needing to revisit the matter later, but you can't make the decisions for him or her in that case. What you can do, Robbins says, is to remain upbeat and supportive, even if you're frustrated or worried. This keeps you a welcome sounding board as your parent moves, however slowly, toward resolution.

Remember that transitions involve an ongoing dialogue. Difficult as that first conversation about a sensitive topic is, it's only the first of many you're likely to have as you strategize your way toward a solution that everyone can feel better about.