

How to talk to family about senior living for an aging parent

Once a family realizes Mom or Dad can no longer live on their own without a great deal of support, decisions need to be made. Here are a few steps to consider when talking to family about senior living.

1 Before the conversation

Be objective. It's critical to view the situation realistically. The primary influencer, or adult child supporting Mom or Dad the most, should keep a timeline of issues to share with family. The influencer should also list the ways they're helping the parent and how it's impacting their own life.

Do research. Families often struggle to understand their options. By visiting nearby senior living communities and inquiring about personal care services, the influencer can learn the pros and cons and educate others about the possibilities.

Ask the older adult what they want. While alone together, the influencer can gently bring up the idea of a change with Mom or Dad. They can ask what their parent actually wants from a living situation, delicately, but directly. This sets the stage for talking with family later.

Plan the meeting. If feasible, the influencer should arrange for family members to meet in person someplace near the parent's home so they can visit and observe things for themselves. If an in-person meeting isn't possible, consider an online call through Zoom, Skype or FaceTime.

2 During the conversation

Communicate openly. Leading by example, the influencer should communicate honestly and respectfully. Sticking to facts is helpful and talking points can keep the discussion on track. Consider that this may be the first of many family meetings.

Explore a backup plan. The influencer should make it clear that the current situation is not sustainable. If the family is resistant to senior living, they need to come up with 'Plan B', or another living option that better supports their parent. This could mean Mom or Dad moves in with another family member. This approach often serves as a wake-up call, nudging family to seriously weigh all their options.

3 After the conversation

Assess your progress. The first conversation might be exploratory in nature and end without a clear solution. Knowing this in advance helps everyone relax and ease into the process of determining the right thing to do for their parent.

Realize you're not alone. The only thing potentially more challenging than realizing an aging parent can no longer manage on their own is reaching a consensus with family about a solution.

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