



STONEBAY
of Orono
SENIOR LIVING

HOW TO TALK TO ELDERLY PARENTS ABOUT ASSISTED LIVING

Starting a discussion about senior living can be tough. In fact, some adult children say it's the most difficult conversation they've ever had with a parent. But with thoughtful planning, it can go a little more smoothly than you imagine.

Tackling “The Talk” with an Aging Parent

Here are a few suggestions to help you get started:

1. Organize a Family Meeting

If the family plans to tackle this topic with an older loved one together, make time to meet beforehand. Make a list of the tasks and chores your loved one needs assistance with. And split up responsibilities for things you would like to do ahead of time, such as learning more about senior care.

2. Research

Before you initiate the conversation, you will need to do some homework! Make sure you and your siblings understand enough about senior living to be able to answer your aging parent's questions and concerns.

Here are a few areas you will want to explore together:

- Identify the different types of senior living communities
- Clarify your parent's needs and compare them with the types of services and amenities offered at different senior living communities
- Get a better understanding of how much local senior living communities' cost
- Determine the types of services communities offer such as:
 - Housekeeping
 - Laundry
 - Meals
 - Life enrichment programs
 - Daily living support
 - Transportation availability
 - Availability of nurses, doctors, emergency care

It is also a good idea to visit a few senior living communities beforehand. Being able to give examples of the types of communities available in your parent's area and what each one offers will help give you confidence.

3. Know What to Expect

Before tackling the conversation, try to gauge your loved one's willingness to have this conversation. Asking general questions may help to identify whether your parent needs help.

Ask about subjects, such as:

- How does the yard look? Are you able to keep up with all of the flower beds?
- Have you been to the doctor lately? Is everything okay?
- Are you still comfortable driving? When was the last time you had the oil changed in the car?

If you find your parent to be defensive or evasive when you initiate these types of questions, consider whether the conversation should be led by someone other than a family member.

In some instances, a neutral third party is the better choice for holding this type of sensitive conversation. A trusted clergy member or a doctor, for instance, may be able to start the conversation and explain the options, without putting a strain on the relationship.

4. Finally, Listen

When talking with your parent, it's important to be patient. Some older adults may actually be relieved that you brought the topic up, while others may become angry. But, unless this discussion is one, they have been waiting to have, don't expect an immediate answer.