

Talking to Parents About **Retirement Living.**

Tips for making a difficult conversation a little bit easier...



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Moving into a retirement community can be a difficult decision. Often, it is the adult children who recognize that their parents should move before the parents feel it is required.

Sometimes the signs are obvious, but often they are not. The fridge and pantry may look a little emptier than usual. The house may be a little more untidy. Dad may be struggling with shoveling the driveway, or having difficulty up the stairs. Mom isn't getting out to visit her friends. A driver's license has recently been revoked. There is some confusion with the six different medication bottles on the kitchen table.

Or maybe they just aren't smiling as much as they were last year.

It may not feel like it, but these challenges are actually a gift: a caution to you and your family that it is time for your parents to consider moving to a retirement community where they can still enjoy their independence, but also have the support and care when needed. All too often, people wait until an emergency strikes. Unfortunately, after a fall or a serious medical complication, it is too late to truly enjoy retirement community living.

In fact, we often hear people say "I should have done this years ago!" once they've moved into a retirement community.

Of course, talking with your parents about moving to a retirement home can be difficult for a number of reasons. For starters, moving out of the family house after many years can be trying. Plus, many older adults have a negative perception of retirement communities. They

might be expecting institutional buildings, small rooms, bland food, and one day after another sitting around with nothing to do.

Fortunately, the reality of many new retirement communities is the exactly opposite.

In fact, most people who tour a retirement community are delighted at how different retirement living now is from the prevailing stigma. With a vibrant group of Community

Members, bright spacious suites, phenomenal food, and a wide variety of amenities and services, retirement living is not what it used to be.

Still, change for an older adult can be disconcerting – especially when related to the home. Moving can be daunting at any age. Mom and Dad likely haven't had to make a decision about where to live in decades. They will probably have many questions about the financial, logistical and social implications of moving into a retirement community. And it may very well be you or a sibling who will help them make this transition successfully.

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So, what can you do to help your parents navigate a move to retirement living? ►

1

Try to get all of the siblings on board from the start. Talk to your siblings before approaching your parents, and explain the changes you have seen in Mom and Dad. You will appreciate their support down the road. Plus, be sure to raise any concerns around budget up front to avoid conflicts later on. Also, consider involving friends, religious mentors, and wellness professionals, such as a family doctor.

2

Approach the conversation gradually, and avoid jumping right into the discussion about retirement living. Rather, start by asking your parents some questions that will introduce the idea about moving to a more suitable setting.

3

If both parents are involved in the decision, try to begin with the more positive parent. Typically, one parent is more prepared to move than the other, and can help you address the others' concerns. This is especially true if one parent is engaged in the 'caregiver' role.

4

Once the topic has surfaced, try to help your parents visualize the decision. Talking about the move to retirement living can be very abstract for older adults. They may not have seen a retirement community since visiting their own parent years ago. Retirement community websites have a wide array of images and videos to help older adults better visualize the lifestyle. Use other tools, like print brochures and senior directories, to help explain all of the factors to consider when making the decision.

5

Invite your parents to participate in the research. If they aren't comfortable scanning websites, then print off information and allow them to review on their own.

6

Get ready for some denial. Remember, it won't help to get into arguments around a parent's health or ability to stay in the house on their own. Present your concerns in a clear and empathetic way that reminds them of your concern for their well-being.

7

No matter where you are in the process, always remind your parents that they have control over the decision. When sharing all of your information and research, remind Mom and Dad that they have the final say over where they will tour, and of course, ultimately move.

This can be a difficult time for your parents and a significant change in your life, too. They may be dealing with feelings of grief and fear. You may also be feeling guilty. These feelings are entirely normal, so be patient with everyone involved – yourself included! Most importantly, these feelings shouldn't prevent you from doing what is ultimately best for them. ►



Moving into a retirement community is a very big decision.

By following these tips, you can make the transition easier for your parents. Over the years, they have spent many hours thinking about what's best for you and how to help you make decisions in your life. This is one way you can return the favour, and give them the gift of a more comfortable, more fulfilling and healthier lifestyle.

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