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How to Talk with Your Aging Loved One About Home Care

A Conversational Guide for Families

Trusted Care. True Compassion.®



If you believe your loved one could benefit from additional support at home, it can be difficult to know when and how to bring up the topic with them.

What if you say the wrong thing? What if they get defensive, refuse to listen or completely shut down?

If you're stressed about conducting a constructive conversation about home care with your loved one—you're not alone; many adult children feel at a loss in this situation. And while it's tempting to put it off, you could just be prolonging the inevitable. For your loved one's well-being, it's vital to begin a dialogue when you start noticing consistent signs indicating a need for help at home.

Getting your loved one the care they need as soon as possible can help improve and protect their health for the long term and significantly lower their risk of falling and other adverse events.



Understanding Your Loved One's Perspective

Change can be difficult, especially as we age and grow more set in our ways. As you approach this conversation, be aware that your loved one may react strongly, especially at first. It may help you to consider their responses through the stages of grief.



While grief is commonly associated with issues involving death, it's actually a process that people commonly experience during any major life transition. Because your loved one may perceive the conversation as a threat to their independence, it could trigger a certain reaction that corresponds with their initial grief. Initially, they may deny that anything has changed or become angry when you suggest modifications to their routine.

However, when you view their reactions as them working through the stages of grief, you're better prepared to help them process their emotions. Understanding the source of their frustration and stage of grief can give you the patience and grace needed to communicate effectively and help them accept that it's time to seek help. To help you better understand and empathize with their potential response, let's explore further the stages of grief.



The 5 Stages of Grief

Stage of grief	How it appears
Denial A common early stage of the grieving process, denial, is when a person refuses to accept that anything has changed. They may dismiss or refuse to acknowledge your concerns about their well-being or deny reality.	"I don't want to talk about this." "I don't need home care." "I'm just fine on my own." "You're making a big deal out of nothing." "That only happened one time." "I've been taking care of myself for X number of years."
Anger When the issues at hand are indisputable, anger can often take the place of denial and manifest through aggressive behaviors like yelling and arguing or acting out passively, like giving the silent treatment. This stage can be particularly difficult for families who wish to avoid upsetting their loved one. However, stand firm with compassion and support your loved one as they work through this stage. Deep down, they know you have their best interests at heart.	"You must really hate me to even suggest this." "You just want to get rid of me." "I'm not going to listen to a thing you say." "I'm the parent, and you're the child—not the other way around." "I'm not about to let a stranger into my house." "You just don't want to be around me to take care of me." "You don't really care about me, or you'd never suggest such a thing."
Bargaining Once your loved one acknowledges their need for help, they may engage in bargaining behavior. Bargaining occurs when we recognize an issue exists but try to minimize or find alternatives instead of accepting the presented solution.	"What if I just promise to take it easier?" "I just won't use the stairs anymore." "I'll take the bus to my appointments and to get my prescriptions filled." "I'll just set up reminders so I don't forget things." "I'll be better about using my calendar." "I just get tired sometimes; it's no big deal." "When I feel dizzy, I'll just sit down." "I promise to take breaks when I need to."



Stage of grief	How it appears
Depression It's natural to feel concerned when your loved one is going through a period of depression. However, by reframing depression as part of the grieving process, you can better support them as they move through this stage. Honor their feelings because they're valid and help them process the reality of their current circumstances by acknowledging their sentiments and expressing empathy.	"You don't love me anymore." "You don't want to help me, and I don't blame you." "I just feel like a burden to you." "I hate getting old." "I'm worthless now." Depression can also manifest as feelings of hopelessness, bouts of crying, loss of interest, excessive sleep, changes in personal hygiene, loss of appetite, low energy and even anger.
Acceptance Once your loved one has processed their grief, they will be more receptive to the concept of home care and recognize that it could be the best decision for both them and you. They can understand where you're coming from and that you're acting out of love.	"I know I need more help around here." "Maybe we could talk to someone and see what they say and how they can help me." "I know you're doing a lot for me right now, and I don't want everything to fall on your shoulders." "I really want to stay at home, and I'm willing to get some extra help if it means I can stay here."



Everybody processes grief differently and moves through it at their own pace, but no matter where your loved one is in the process, it's helpful to try meeting them where they are. If you can recognize their stages of grief and approach them from a place of compassion—the more productive and positive your conversations will be.



How to Prepare for a Home Care Dialogue with Your Loved One

For potentially difficult conversations like this, preparation is key. It'll help you feel more confident about initiating a dialogue and ensure your conversation is productive. Here are some tips for promoting a positive discussion:

Do your research

Take the time to educate yourself on the details of home care, so you can make a compelling case about why you believe it's the best option for your loved one. Connect their recent health issues and risks with the benefits that home care can offer.

Home care services can help with a wide variety of issues that are common amongst seniors, including:

- Energy conservation support
- Reducing risks for falls
- Medication management
- Encouraging optimal food and liquid intake
- Combating social isolation with trusted companionship
- Maintaining independence in the preferred setting of home
- Providing respite care for loved ones, for both additional support and to address any temporary lapses in caregiving
- Maintaining the care continuum for those with chronic health challenges
- Promoting and enhancing the quality of life and health at home
- Monitoring health and wellness, and catching any symptoms before they worsen

Call for backup

Whether it's another family member, a friend that your loved one trusts or additional resources to strengthen your position—be prepared with some extra emotional and intellectual support.



Helpful Conversational Tips

During a dialogue with your loved one, it can be easy to fall into old patterns and roles.



Here are some helpful tips to keep your conversation productive and positive:

- **Don't make it a presentation; keep it a two-way conversation.**

Be ready to explain why you feel home care is a good choice for them, acknowledge their needs and connect them to the services home care provides. Remember, this is a conversation, not a presentation, so be ready to listen, answer their questions or commit to finding the answers if you don't yet know. Emphasize that they can reach out to you later with their thoughts once they've had more time to process them.

- **Accentuate the positive**

It's important to highlight the many positive aspects of home care for your aging loved one. When you explain its benefits, tailor your talking points to what matters most to them.

For example, if your mom takes pride in having a nice, clean house but can't keep up with all the chores anymore, a home caregiver can make sure everything gets done just the way she likes. Home care also combats the social isolation and loneliness many elderly homebound individuals experience. If your parent misses having company around the house, home care offers companionship and the joy of having someone to talk to again.

Additionally, home care also offers a path to maintaining independence in the home setting. Most older adults report they hope to remain at home as they age, and highly value their independence. Home care provides a balance between safety and independence, allowing your loved one to remain in their beloved home.

- **Remember to listen**

When you anticipate a challenging conversation, it's natural to overprepare. However, when the time comes, this can cause you to only focus on presenting your case, forgetting the importance of listening to what your loved one has to say. It's vital to involve them in discussions about their life and care and to allow them the space to speak their mind.

Using open-ended questions is an effective strategy to show you're listening to their input and value their viewpoint. Some examples of open-ended questions to use in this context include:

- "Are you worried about losing your privacy?"
- "Are you concerned about how much home care will cost?"
- "Do you think you could use some extra help and support around the house?"
- "Under what circumstances would you accept extra help at home?"
- "How do you imagine your life at home in the future?"
- "Do you have concerns for your safety? If so, what are they?"

- **Focus on examples of its benefits**

Consider sharing examples of people they know who have benefited from home care services. You can also emphasize that it is a way to avoid transitioning into senior living and spend more quality time together without the added stress of you being their sole caregiver.

- **Timing is everything**

You don't want your home care conversation to feel rushed, sudden or unplanned. Set aside time to allow the dialogue to unfold naturally without added stress or pressure. You may even want to schedule a time for the chat with your loved one to ensure they're also prepared instead of blindsided.

- **Bring in the experts**

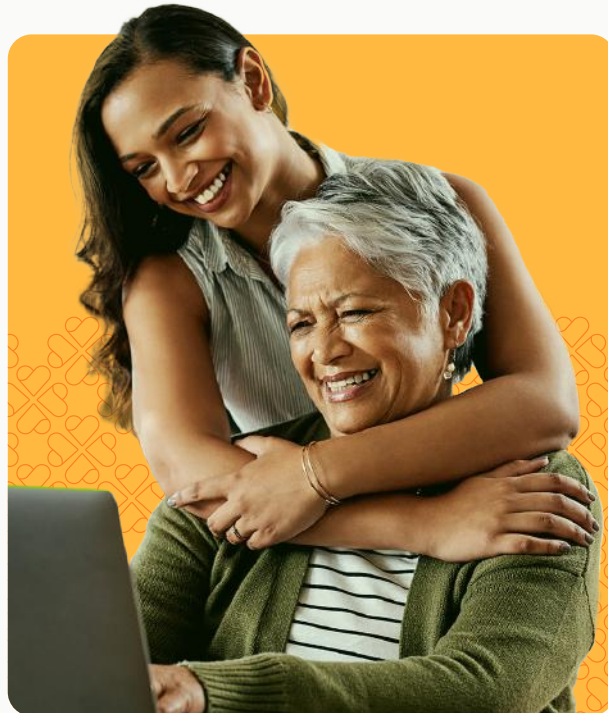
If you need extra help and support to ensure your home care conversation goes well—call on the experts at HomeWell Care Services to assist you in explaining the many benefits of home care to your loved one in need. We're experienced in outlining the whys of home care and how it can be a great choice to enhance your loved one's safety and quality of life.

It's also important for your loved one to understand—home care doesn't label them as sick or elderly. Home care simply offers a path to remain at home by providing extra help to fill in gaps in their routine and keep them healthy, safe and happy. This support is customized and designed to help them reclaim their energy and enjoyment of life.



Following Up on Your Conversation

Regardless of whether your initial conversation went well or poorly, it's important to follow up. Making big life changes typically involves more than one discussion, so it's good to plan ahead for future talks. You don't want the subject to go cold without coming to a consensus. When it comes to home care discussions, time is of the essence.



Here are some tips to help you keep the home care conversation moving forward—

- **Offer to research together**

You're likely more tech-savvy than your aging loved one and can help them find the information they need about home care services. By researching together, you can enhance their comfort with the idea of home care and help them understand its benefits. This is also a way to empower them by involving them in the decision-making process. Many elderly adults feel things are happening to them instead of with them, so involving them can help them feel more in control of their situation.

- **Schedule a follow-up**

If your loved one is open to it, schedule a time to have a follow-up discussion where you can listen to their thoughts, questions and concerns. It's vital that they feel involved in this process, especially if they're resistant and working through the stages of grief. Alternatively, offer to provide them with resources they can also review on their own time.

- **Get some outside support**

To help you make progress, HomeWell offers consultations to demonstrate how our non-medical home care services work and can benefit your family. Our professionals are experienced in navigating these conversations and addressing concerns, and we would be happy to help you and your loved one reach a consensus.



Next Steps with HomeWell

If you're grappling with knowing how and when to open the home care dialogue with your loved one or struggling to get them engaged in the conversation—HomeWell is here to help! We understand that every family's situation is unique, and we're dedicated to finding solutions that meet your family's specific needs. We can help you navigate the complexities of aging well at home and create a custom care plan that works for everyone.

With a highly personalized care management approach and a wide range of care offerings from companionship to everyday care and specialized support for chronic conditions, we provide the highest quality of care in the place where your loved one feels most comfortable—home.



Request your consultation with our team today to discover what HomeWell can do for you.





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