

How to talk to your parents about senior living.

Maybe you've noticed your aging parents are having trouble keeping up with the maintenance of their home. Or maybe you've noticed they need help around the house doing things that used to come easily, like cooking, cleaning and running errands.. Talking with your loved ones about making a lifestyle change can put you in an awkward position of being both their child and advisor. It can also be difficult for your parents. Especially after being the ones giving you advice and guidance for the past several decades.

To help you talk with your parents about considering a life change that will enhance their lives, here are some suggestions.

Start the conversation.

Don't wait to start talking with your parents about making a move. Even if your loved ones are healthy and currently managing everything, deciding now can help them make the move on their own terms. Having to make a sudden move because of an unexpected health issue will make everything more difficult and stressful for them and you.

Remember that moving to a community is about enjoying life more while remaining as independent as possible. To get started, consider talking to your parents about their goals for the future and suggest that moving to a maintenance-free senior living community will give them more time to pursue the things they want to do.

Be factual.

Be prepared for any discussion about moving to become emotional. But if you can stick to the facts and present evidence of the need for change, you'll minimize some of the tension. This will allow the both of you to make decisions based on reason. To help, keep track of health incidents, and expenses. You can also track the time they spend alone and remind them of how they like to socialize

Focus on the future.

Everyone has goals and dreams for the future. One approach you can take is to have your parents talk about what they want to accomplish. Do they want to visit friends? Would they like to travel? Is there a new hobby they'd like to learn? Is there a project they've been putting off until they find the time? Or maybe they'd just like to do less cleaning and cooking.

Possible Roadblocks.

Change can be scary. And when people are afraid or anxious, they may not make the most rational choices and instead focus on maintaining the status quo. When talking with your parents, understand that their perspective is probably different than yours, so try to put yourself in their shoes. Ask them questions to figure out their wants and needs. Let them know you're on their side and want to work with them to find the best possible solution.

Roadblock #1: We're fine where we are.

To many, home ownership represents achieving the American dream. Plus, they probably have a lot of memories of celebrating holidays, parties and other life events. The idea of leaving all that behind can be difficult. Instead of talking about what they're giving up, focus on what they could gain. More independence. A better fit for their current lifestyle. The safety and security of knowing they have a smart plan for the future.

Roadblock #2: I don't want to move to a nursing home.

Unless your parents have done their own research or visited friends at a community, they may have outdated ideas about senior living. It's not uncommon for older adults to remember the institutional type of "old folks home" or "nursing home" from when their parents were older. This is a good time to share with them what you've learned and even visit some of the communities you've researched in person or by visiting their websites.

Roadblock #3: I'm not ready.

As we age, we typically think of ourselves as being younger than we actually are. Especially if we're in fairly good health. This is a good time to talk with them about their future goals and how moving to a community would give them more opportunities to enjoy life. It's also important to remind them about the practicality of planning for the unexpected.

If at first you don't succeed ...

Making a lifestyle change is a big decision and any conversation about it is best done over time. If you start the conversation early, your parents can get used to the idea and even start to get excited about the possibilities the future holds. If you have to act fast, you can still talk to your parents about their goals and help them understand the benefits of moving to a community.

Community visits.

Once you and your parents decide that a move to a community is a good option, it's time to schedule some visits. To get a feel for the community, stay for lunch and taste the food. Talk with the residents and ask them what they like and don't like. Ask the community representative how they'll help meet your mom and dad's specific goals. If you can, drop by during different times of day to get a better feel for the lifestyle. When it's a good fit, you'll know it.

Taking the first step.

By doing some research now, you'll be better prepared and able to make a more informed decision when the time comes. If you'd like to learn more about your loved one's senior living options, or how Peace Village can fit into their lifestyle and budget, give us a call at 708-361-3683



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