

How to Talk to a Loved One About Retirement Living

A Guide to Creating a Productive Discussion

If you believe the time is right to discuss retirement living options with your loved one, there are ways to ensure you have a productive discussion. For many people, this discussion may be difficult to start or to even accept, so it may help to remember that your goal is for the person you love to be safe, comfortable and free to enjoy their life in a safe and caring community.

Before any productive discussion, start by identifying your known facts, questions and goals. When you begin the discussion, do so with the intention of listening with empathy as well as clearly stating your positions. Finally, you'll want to follow up afterward to make sure that everyone understands each other and knows what the next steps are.

Before your discussion, here are some things to identify for yourself to make sure you are prepared and able to answer your loved one's questions:

- What are the challenges and hazards of their current living situation: why are you concerned and considering the option of a retirement living community?
- How much research have you or your loved one done into the existing options available?
- What are the benefits you're hoping your loved one will receive from a retirement living community?
- Are you able to have this discussion face to face with your loved one? An in-person discussion may be more helpful for your loved one to feel at ease.
- What is the approximate, proposed timeline for transition from their current living situation to a retirement community? It is best not to rush, but if the situation is pressing, you may want to have your facts and options as clearly lined out as possible.
- Are you able to help your loved one go through their expenses to compare the cost of living where they are now vs. a retirement living community?
- Are you able to help your loved one transition from their current living situation to the retirement living community? Downsizing, packing and moving are often overwhelming and knowing that they have support may help your loved one.
- Will this discussion be a surprise or unwelcome to your loved one?
- Will your loved one be open to the idea of changing their living situation?
- Are you able to take your loved one on a tour of the proposed facility to give them more information and help them to decide?
- What is your goal for the discussion?

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During your discussion, here are some things which might be helpful:

- Remember that many people have different ideas of what retirement living is like. It may be helpful to ask your loved one what they think of retirement living communities and to arrange a tour for them.
- Listening with empathy is vital for everyone to feel that their concerns are being heard.
- Sharing your feelings may be necessary for your loved one to see your point of view.
- Speaking calmly, softly and with an even tone of voice can help to keep the discussion calm if emotions run high.
- Try to highlight the benefits that your loved one will receive from a retirement living community.
- Many people feel that transitioning to a retirement living community will mean facing their mortality. Try to approach the conversation with the mindset of understanding and that a retirement living community can help them live their life to the fullest, along with the other benefits they specifically need.
- Remember that, ultimately, it is your loved one's decision to make.
- To finish the discussion, try to cover what was discussed and make sure that everyone understands each other. If decisions were made, make sure you discuss what the next steps are, who needs to do them and when they need to be done.

After your discussion, you might want to reach back out to your loved one to let them know that you're still there to support them. If you need to set up another time to talk, give your loved one the time they need to process and research. Remind them that you love them and will support whatever decision they come to.

