

# Now it's your turn for "the talk"

## How to talk to parents about assisted living



Certainly, all of us want to stay in our own homes for as long as possible. Yet, there often comes a point when the children of elderly parents see that staying put is not in their parents' best interest. The parents may see things differently...

Sons and daughters may have explored in-home care coupled with a personal alarm system, and concluded that they're not enough. So, if you're that son or daughter, how do you talk about the realities of failing health or physical/mental abilities, and about the option of assisted living?

The love of independence runs deep in us humans, so you must be a good but gentle negotiator who can help the parent make the decision him or herself. The reaction that "moving to an old folk's home is having one foot in the grave" is natural, and you'll just have to hang in there regarding stubborn perceptions and defenses.

### Negotiation tips

Replace bluntness with subtlety. Plant facts and suggestions into normal conversation. The best outcome is that the parent sees the wisdom of accepting some help and makes the decision him or herself. You might touch on:

- ▶ The cost and hassle of home maintenance
- ▶ Health problems and accidents (such as falls) that have occurred
- ▶ Lapses in memory that lead to dangerous incidents such as leaving the stove on
- ▶ Lack of social opportunities

According to an AARP survey, 90% of seniors want to stay in their own home until they die



- ▶ The chore of cooking proper meals
- ▶ The fact that you want the parent to live at home, but that you can't be available 24/7
- ▶ The existence of other living options that could make life safer, easier and more fun
- ▶ Friends of your parent who already live in an assisted living facility



Suggesting (but without pushing) visits to quality senior facilities will increase comfort levels and acceptance – and doing so right after an incident such as a fall can be effective. But, if that doesn't “make the sale,” reinforce the positives:

- ▶ Safety and security
- ▶ Freedom from home maintenance responsibilities
- ▶ Private room
- ▶ Social opportunities with new friends and activities
- ▶ Assistance with health needs
- ▶ Prepared meals



If your parent keeps putting off the move, make the point again when he or she is feeling lonely or another accident or close call has occurred. It might also be time to call a family meeting to express worry for the parent's safety. Enlisting the help of a family friend, spiritual leader or other respected third party can bear fruit.

There may be drama, but ultimately you must do what is right for parents who may not be able or willing to see what is best for themselves. The good news is that most elders who make the move to quality assisted living facilities soon learn to love the new lifestyle!