

How to Start The Downsizing Conversation with Your Parents

We understand that addressing downsizing or the need for help at home isn't an easy topic to discuss. Use these helpful tips to start the conversation about maintenance-free, senior living.

Prepare In Advance

BE PRESENT

Have this conversation in person if at all possible. If not, a virtual video connection where you can be face-to-face and sensitive to how the message is being received is important. This isn't a conversation to have by telephone, if you can avoid it. Select a day when you, your parents and any siblings involved are relaxed and rested. Reserve a time and location where you can talk without risk of interruption.

RESEARCH

Learn about opportunities for senior living you would like to recommend. Consider if you want your parents near you or if they would do better staying in their current area. Understanding their needs and preferences along with available options will help as you communicate why it's time to downsize.

LISTEN WITH EMPATHY

Empathy, not sympathy, is critical to a good discussion. Moving out of a home where they spent many years creating memories is an emotional process and may be difficult to embrace. Show your parents their feelings matter and that you are going to continue to support them to make it as easy and as painless as possible. Keep in mind that getting older brings layered losses that build on one another - consider if your parents have lost employment, mobility, health, energy and now their familiar home.

ASK QUESTIONS

As with many difficult discussions, beginning the conversation is often the hardest part. Start with open-ended questions, such as the sample questions provided below. Then **listen** to what is being said.

Open the Conversation

HIGHLIGHT THE NEED (sample questions)

- How are you doing living at home alone?
- Do you still feel safe living here? (mention any specific concerns such as medication management, stairs, challenges in the bathtub or in the kitchen)
- Are you eating well? (mention any changes in health)
- How are you doing staying social and connected with other people?
- Any concerns about driving? Would learning about other transportation options help reduce worry about getting where you need to go, car maintenance costs, traffic, parking?

SHARE THE OPTIONS

Make notes of your parents' concerns as they talk about the current situation and explain what you've learned about the range of options in senior care. Discuss the differences between:

- Independent Living
- Assisted Living
- Memory Support
- Live At Home options
- Skilled Nursing
- Continuing Care Retirement Communities
- Life Plan Communities

MAKE THE RECOMMENDATION

Addressing specific concerns, make the recommendation of which options you think would be the best fit and what led you to your decision. Socialization, activities, maintenance-free, dining options, less worry, or other positive considerations you identified.

AGREE TO TALK AGAIN

Avoid information overload. Unless there is immediate danger for your parents, this process to downsizing is a journey and will require many conversations and exploration. You've accomplished the most difficult part and opened the conversation with helpful basic information up front.

It's never a good idea to make a decision when feeling overwhelmed. Allow your parents to take a deep breath and set a time to meet again. In doing so, you'll make good on the promise to be supportive along the way to your parent's next living choice. At Ascension Living, we are here to help along the way. For more information about our communities, visit ascensionliving.org.