



We spend decades learning to be self-sufficient. We get it, with age comes tough challenges, but we picture that happening to others not to ourselves. So when it hits close to home, it is hard to admit to a problem, ask for help, or realize that things may not be the same as they have always been.

The need for change takes many forms. It may be sudden due to an accident or hospitalization. It may be gradual with noticeable lapses in memory, questionable decision making, changes in socialization habits, or decline in hygiene or eating.

The key is recognizing that something is not right and that is when the conversation starts.

As with most uneasy conversations, planning is key. Honestly trust yourself, you know what feels right, and there is no right or wrong answer. You know yourself, you know your loved one, and you know how uneasy conversations are traditionally handled in your family. If writing down your thoughts and feelings helps then write a letter ... make some notes and talk over the phone ... set a time a talk in person.

Don't expect this to be one and done, reaching the right decision is what is key, and to get there will be a process. Here are some scenarios that will be helpful in starting the conversation.

HOW TO START THE CONVERSATION ABOUT ASSISTED LIVING

If they are ready to make a change

They may not say it, but many older adults recognize that change is needed and are actually ready for assistance in changing their way of life. One way to ease the process is to invite them to accompany you on a neighborhood tour and to learn more about amenities, activities, and community life.

If the internet is a trusted source of information ...

Often, these conversations can be started simply by stating that you heard about a website ... give them the link, let them review it at their own pace and form their own opinion .



If the Doctor is where they go for advice

Begin the conversation by asking, "Have you talked with your doctor lately?" This validates the notion that this is a medical recommendation that is best for their health and well-being. Talking with a physician who knows the history, knows the circumstances, and can help explain options, can go a long way. It's all about showing support, so consider going together so the tough questions get asked, and you hear the same answers. The better you are informed the better your decisions will be.

If a Friend is where they turn first

Inquiring about their friends' experiences with life transitions frequently leads to the question of whether they have considered this for themselves. When loved ones would rather not talk about themselves or their situation, it is easier to bring up the stories of others to break the ice and start the thought process and ask "Would a change be the right choice for me too?"

Allow the conversation to flow naturally, and they will soon realize how much easier and stress-free life could be in an assisted living community.

If they are a planner ...

Some people are natural leaders; they take charge of whatever they set out to accomplish. This trait does not deteriorate with age. Often, as people get older, they become more set in their ways and are unwilling to try anything new unless they have complete control.

Make use of their natural strength and abilities to aid in the transition. "When you decide you're ready to make some changes, I'm ready to assist you. It will be a difficult decision, but you can handle it, and we are here to help."

If they are concerned about their health or safety ...

A current caregiver can frequently offer advice and start the conversation. They are aware of incidents in which your loved one could have been injured or was injured because no one was present to help at the time. What if they were injured in a fire or a break-in? These are scenarios that many older people worry about, but they may not express their concerns openly.

Bringing up your own examples of calamity can often inspire people to realize that we are all in this together. Mishaps and all. Your main goal would be to empathize with their current situation and offer them the opportunity to "check things out." You can also make big changes appear easier by mentioning big changes in your life or the life of a loved one in the past.



Are they feeling isolated ...

Simply talking about past memories or enjoyable places they've lived creates good feelings and demonstrates care about enjoyment in life. A shared memory is always a good place to start. "Do you recall the first place we lived... the neighbor next door ... card games with Aunt Sue ... Family meals? Reminiscing about what has brought joy is a great way to ease into how a lifestyle change can bring a return to life pleasures. Expressing interest in the activities and amenities available in assisted living, as well as how they would enjoy the community, creates an interest in a different, new, or improved way of life.

If they are unable to make good decisions ...

Your loved one may not realize that they are making decisions that put their safety or health at risk. This is when you have to take action to protect them when they can't. If there is an imminent risk of injury or deterioration of health and wellness, the only viable option is to seek medical attention or the assistance of a supportive care professional. They can assist you in describing to your loved one the difficulties they are facing as well as the positive impact other options may provide. If you make this difficult decision and they object. Recognize that time will heal their hurt feelings, and your loved one will usually see the benefit of your decision sooner rather than later.

These are difficult conversations to have, but once a loved one moves to Camellia Place, family members frequently comment on the remarkable positive changes in their life. And how grateful they are to have made the decision to extend their loved one's "life" in their "years."

For more information, to schedule a tour, or simply to get more help, contact us.

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