

5 Steps for Discussing Difficult Topics With Aging Parents

As an adult child of aging parents, you may need to make important decisions about their care and safety. Try not to wait until a crisis happens to start these conversations. The earlier you talk, the easier it can be for everyone. These five steps can help you begin.

Step 1: Set the T.E.M.P.O.

A good conversation starts with the right T.E.M.P.O.:

Timing

Choose a time when your parents are not busy or distracted. Make sure you also have enough time to listen and talk without feeling rushed.

Experience

Sharing your own experience can make it easier to start the conversation. For example, "Mom, I recently updated my will. It made me wonder when you last looked at yours."

Motivation

Think about why you want to have the conversation. If you are feeling angry, frustrated or upset, wait until you are calm. Your goal should be to support your parents' safety, health and quality of life.

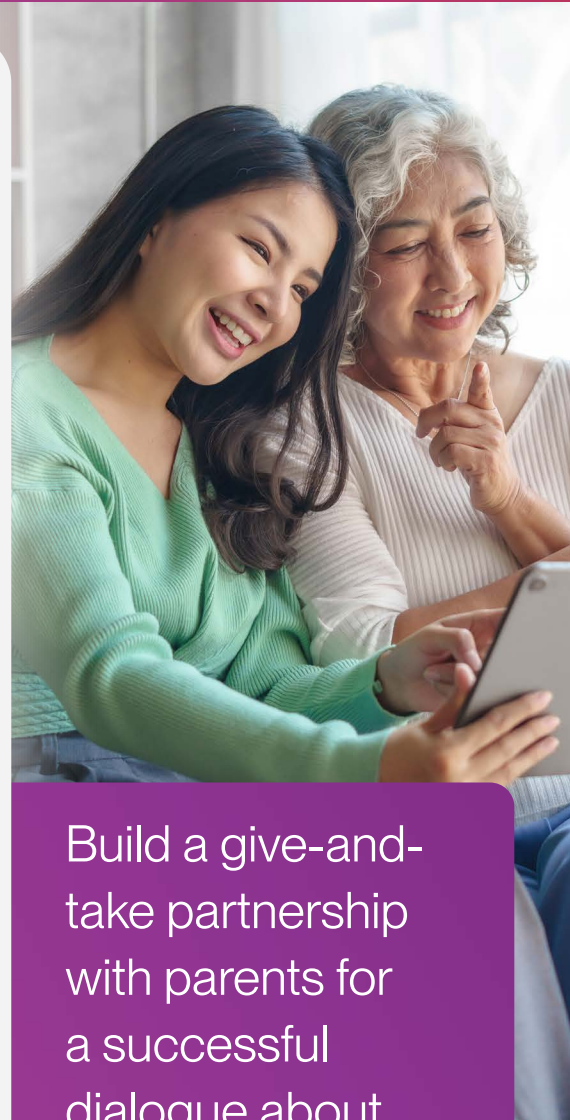
Place

Choose a comfortable place where your parents feel at ease. Some topics may be easier to discuss in a quiet setting away from distractions.

Outcome

You do not need all the answers in one conversation. Focus on starting an open and honest discussion. The goal is to understand your parents' wishes, feelings and needs.

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Build a give-and-take partnership with parents for a successful dialogue about their future.

LCT-351-20260922



Step 2: Be a Partner

Work with your parents as partners. Listen to their thoughts and respect their choices. A team approach can help build trust and make conversations more productive.

Step 3: Learn about Aging Issues

Take time to learn about common challenges older adults face. Read trusted resources, talk with local organizations and ask friends about their experiences. The more you know, the better prepared you will be to help.

Step 4: Explore Care and Living Options

Look at different options before making decisions. Today there are many choices, including in-home care, medical support, financial planning services, adult day programs and senior living communities.

Step 5: Create a Plan Together

There is no single solution that works for everyone. Work with your parents to create a plan that fits their needs, goals and preferences while also considering your family's needs.

Starting these conversations early can help reduce stress and make future decisions easier for everyone involved.