



STAGES of SENIOR CARE

Your Step-by-Step Guide to Making the Best Decisions

by Paul and Lori Hogan

Chapter 2: Tips: How Adult Children Should Talk to Parents

Communication expert Jake Harwood, Ph.D., from the University of Arizona, has these tips for family when talking to seniors about sensitive subjects:

- **Get started.** If you're forty or your parents are seventy, it's time to start observing and gathering information thoughtfully and carefully. Don't reach a conclusion from a single observation.
- **Talk it out.** Approach your parents with a conversation. Discuss what you've observed, using concrete examples if necessary, and ask your parents what they think is going on. If your parents acknowledge the situation, ask what they think would be a good solution.
- **Sooner is best.** Talk sooner rather than later, before a crisis has occurred. If you know your loved one has poor eyesight or has trouble driving at night, begin to address those issues before a problem arises.
- **Forget the baby talk.** Remember that you are talking to an adult, not a child. Patronizing speech or baby talk will put older adults on the defensive and conveys a lack of respect.
- **Emphasize solutions that maximize independence.** Always try to move toward solutions that provide the maximum amount of independence for the older person. Look for answers that optimize strengths and compensate for problems. For instance, if your loved ones need help at home, look for tools that can help them maintain their strength.
- **Let them know that you are aware of the whole situation.** If your dad dies and your mom's house soon sinks into disarray, it's probably not because she's ill. She's lost a lifelong relationship and needs social support. Help her find it.

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