

Elder Care Conversations: Speak with Compassion

Starting a conversation with your parents regarding their wishes as they get older is never easy. Not only do you need to raise questions regarding their future health care, you also need to discuss their finances. This can be uncomfortable for everyone but is critically important for protecting their assets and ensuring their access to quality health care. Follow these tips to speak with COMPASSION:

Control: Make sure your parents understand that you are not taking away any of their control.

Observe: Observe body language and pay attention to reactions. Do not do all of the talking.

Mediate: Act as a mediator, not a lecturer. Try to find common ground to bring everyone together.

Peers: Tell your parents what their peers are doing to plan for the future (i.e., "The Smiths set up a trust to protect assets").

Arm: Arm yourself with good information so you can present options clearly. Speak with a professional (elder law attorney, geriatric care manager, financial advisor) for concrete solutions.

Suggest: Suggest a plan of action but do not make demands.

Support: Be supportive of your parents' ideas and wishes. Put yourself in their shoes before you speak.

Initiate: Initiate the conversation when your parents might be most receptive. Be a good listener and be patient with your parents.

Options: Outline options (legal, healthcare, living arrangements, etc.) and provide practical information and resources.

Never Forget: **You are still their child and always will be!**