



# Talking with a Parent About Moving to a Senior Living Community

*Tips for Preparing for and Initiating the Conversation*



PRESBYTERIAN  
**SENIOR LIVING**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction .....	3
In this Guide .....	3
<b>1. Preparing for the Conversation .....</b>	<b>4</b>
• <b>Do Your Research</b>	
• Learn about the different types of senior living communities	
• Familiarize yourself with the benefits and potential challenges	
• Prepare to answer commonly asked questions	
• <b>Choose the Right Time and Place to Talk</b>	
• Find the right place	
• Choose the time	
• <b>Anticipate Objections</b>	
• Be ready to address common fears and stigmas	
<b>2. Start the Conversation .....</b>	<b>6</b>
• <b>Open with Empathy</b>	
• Acknowledge the difficulty of the conversation	
• Demonstrate care and concern	
• <b>Ask Open-Ended Questions</b>	
• Gauge your parent’s feelings	
• Let them talk	
• <b>Frame the Discussion Around Their Needs</b>	
• Focus on the benefits of senior living	
<b>3. Involve Your Parent in the Process.....</b>	<b>7</b>
• <b>Empower Your Parent to Be a Decision-Maker</b>	
• Encourage engagement	
• <b>Ensure Your Parent Feels Heard</b>	
• Listen to their concerns	
• Work together	
<b>4. Moving Forward .....</b>	<b>8</b>
• <b>Take Small Steps</b>	
• Don’t expect an immediate decision	
• Revisit communities	
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>9</b>



## Introduction

When a parent is experiencing a decline in health or has started to be fearful of living alone, a senior living community can be an ideal solution. With choices ranging from independent living and assisted living to continuing care/life plan communities, there are options to meet every need.

But tackling the conversation with an aging parent isn't always easy. Adult children often delay having this talk with their loved one because they just don't know where or how to start.

## Inside this Guide

In this guide, you will find suggestions to make this conversation go more smoothly. We cover everything from the importance of demonstrating empathy and respect to acknowledging the difficult emotional impact of a move. And we'll share a few reminders on setting expectations and offering meaningful support.



# 1 Preparing the Conversation

## • Do Your Research

Before you sit down to talk with your family member about moving to a senior living community, it's a good idea to put some time into researching your options. Many adult children start their search online and then make phone calls and personal visits to those communities that seem like a good solution. Not only will it give you the opportunity to become better educated, but it can also help eliminate those places you feel wouldn't be of interest to your parent.

Here are a few tips to help you get ready for this discussion:

- **Learn about the different types of senior living communities:** One of the first items to put on your list is to learn more about each type of senior living community. It's the best way to determine what type of housing will be the best fit. The most common are independent living, assisted living, memory care, and nursing care centers. Then there are life plan communities, also known as continuing care communities because they offer a variety of levels of care on one campus.
- **Familiarize yourself with the benefits and potential challenges:** Once you narrow your search down to the type of care that best meets your loved one's needs, take time to learn more about it. Each level of care has unique benefits and challenges. Familiarizing yourself with those will enable you to have an educated conversation with your family member.
- **Prepare to answer commonly asked questions:** As you make preliminary calls and visits to different senior living communities, you'll want to inquire about some of the basics your family member will want to know. Those questions often include pricing and what is included, availability of an apartment/suite, whether they are required to make a long-term commitment, and what they might have in common with other residents.

- **Choose the Right Time and Place to Talk**

Adult children who are busy juggling caregiving for a parent with the responsibilities of their own family and career might be tempted to rush through this talk. Failing to take the necessary time, however, might result in a parent being unwilling to consider moving. Instead, keep these tips in mind:

- **Find the right place:** Once you are ready to initiate this conversation, it's time to choose the right time and place to talk. A quiet, secluded spot where you won't be interrupted is best.
- **Choose the time:** Equally important is when to have this conversation. Plan it for a day when you have time to devote to your parent and won't be distracted.

- **Anticipate Objections**

- **Be ready to address common fears and stigmas:** Older adults are sometimes fearful of this move because they have inaccurate or outdated ideas about what community life is and isn't. Try to get a better understanding of how your parent feels about senior living communities, from worries that they'll lose their independence to concerns that they can't afford it.





## 2 Starting the Conversation

If the very idea of having this talk with a parent gives you anxiety, know that you aren't alone. Adult children often share this same reluctance. Here are a few tips to make things go more smoothly:

- **Open With Empathy**

- **Acknowledge the difficulty of the conversation:** Right up front, tell your parent you know this will be a tough talk for both of you.
- **Demonstrate care and concern:** Make sure your parent knows that you have initiated this discussion out of concern for their current and future needs and safety.



- **Ask Open-Ended Questions**

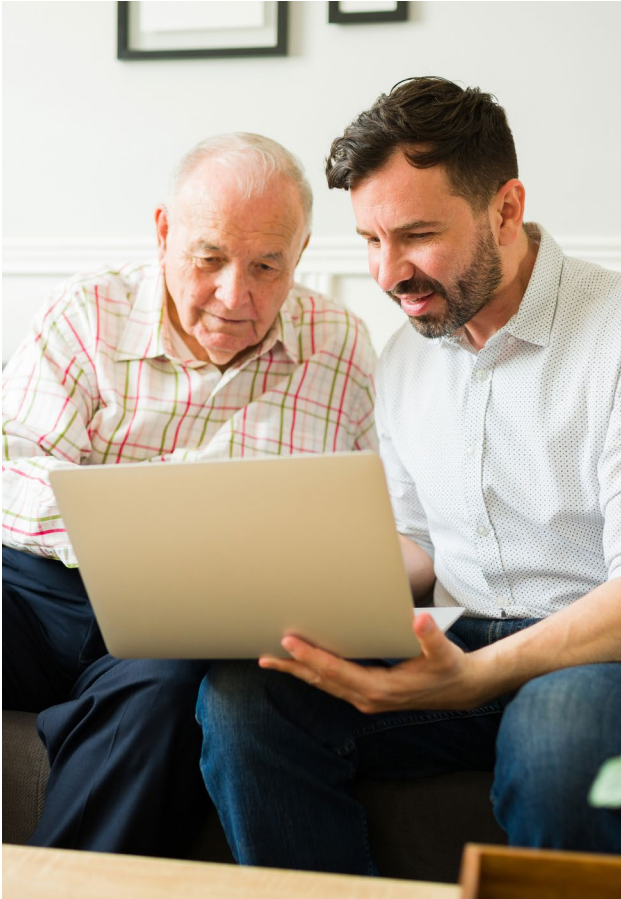
- **Gauge your parent's feelings:** Don't be so focused on moving toward your end goal that you overlook watching the nonverbal signals your loved one is putting out.
- **Let them talk:** It will also be essential to let your family member talk without interrupting them. Unless you need clarification on something they say, let them talk.

- **Frame the Discussion Around Their Needs**

- **Focus on the benefits of senior living:** Think about what motivated you to begin this process. Are you worried about your parent's nutrition? Or maybe feel they are isolated and lonely? Whatever it is, focus your talk on how senior living can help overcome those worries.



## 3 Involving Your Parent in the Process



Unless your parent isn't physically or cognitively able to participate in this process, make sure you include them. While you might want to handle some of the more mundane tasks for them, it will be important to make them feel like the decision-maker if you are hoping to gain their buy-in.

- **Empower Your Parent to Be a Decision-Maker**

- **Encourage engagement:** As you move forward with making your selection, try to involve your parent. Have them visit communities, meet the staff, and talk to current residents. Inquire at the community to see if you can attend activities and have a meal there to help you get a true feel for the lifestyle and residents.

- **Ensure Your Parent Feels Heard**

- **Listen to their concerns:** When you are worried about a parent's well-being, it can be tough to go slowly and listen to their concerns. But doing so will be an important and necessary part of this process.
- **Work together:** Along those same lines, commit to working together throughout the search and move. For example, split up the list of communities to call. Or divide up the online reviews you want to read as part of your selection process.



## 4 Moving Forward

Finally, have realistic expectations for how quickly this transition will occur.

### • Take Small Steps

- **Don't expect an immediate decision:** This is often the toughest aspect of the process for adult children. But it's rare for a parent to agree to a move during your first talk. Instead, you will likely need to have a series of discussions.
- **Revisit communities:** Just as you will need to have multiple conversations regarding this move, families should also make several visits to each community under serious consideration. That includes evenings and weekends. It's the best way to get an accurate depiction of the culture and staffing.







[View Our Community List](#)

## Conclusion

With communities throughout the Mid-Atlantic region, Presbyterian Senior Living offers a variety of lifestyles and care options. We invite you to schedule a visit to one of our locations to learn more!



PRESBYTERIAN  
**SENIOR LIVING**

One Trinity Drive E., Suite 201 | Dillsburg, PA 17019

**717.502.8840**

[www.psl.org](http://www.psl.org)