

Aging Wisely®

Comprehensive Care Management and Consultation

Help! Mom Won't Listen!

What to Do When You Are Concerned About an Aging Loved One

Many of us have had or will face the conversations about issues such as bringing help into the home, giving up driving, or moving to an Assisted Living Facility with our loved ones.

- ✓ Think about the person's perspective and take time to listen to their concerns, thoughts and questions.
- ✓ Don't push—sometimes it is better to drop the subject and let your relative process the information and come to some conclusions on his/her own.
- ✓ Be aware of differing communication styles, which often have an age and/or generational basis. You may want action and lose patience with styles you view as rambling, indecisive, and repetitive. Pick appropriate time and place for discussions and set aside time. Realize how your own emotions may be impacting the conversation and increasing resistance.
- ✓ Enlist the help of a professional **geriatric care manager**, trusted advisor, or other family members. Sometimes a different approach, differences in relationships (or the neutrality of not having a personal stake) makes a difference.
- ✓ Attempt to talk about proactive changes prior to crisis, with a focus on maintaining independence and choice. However, when a crisis occurs, use the opportunity to introduce necessary changes (i.e. this may be time for a “respite” or “rehab” stay at a care facility which perhaps will lead to an easier transition).
- ✓ Prioritize and rethink what you feel are “necessary” changes. Perhaps there is a compromise that can be reached that doesn't compromise your loved one's safety.
- ✓ Act as a facilitator. How can you help your loved one? Have you listened to them and looked for options that may better suit their desires? What are their objections and values underlying their choices?
- ✓ Talk to an expert when Alzheimer's or other forms of dementia are involved. Memory disorders may change the needs, and mean your loved one is less able to logically process choices and make safe decisions, but it can be hard to draw these lines.
- ✓ Know what resources to turn to, particularly if your loved one becomes a danger to themselves or others. Visit www.eldercare.gov for local agencies and 1-800ABUSE in Florida for elder abuse or neglect reports.

Suggested Books: Pipher, Mary. *Another Country: Navigating the Emotional Terrain of Our Elders*.

Solie, David. *How to Say it to Seniors: Closing the Communication Gap with our Elders*.

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