



Having the Difficult Conversations About Change

The following are useful tips that will help you have difficult conversations with your family members about the changes that are to come regarding their care. It is not always easy for people to admit that they need help or they need a change. Discussing their current conditions with them and asking them questions about their care preferences can make this easier. Keeping these tips in mind will help make the process a little easier and less stressful for everyone.

1. Do your best to **pick a good time** that works for your loved one.
2. **Speak in a calm reassuring voice**, but do not speak to them like they are a child.
3. Never miss the opportunity to **listen to them**. If possible, get with other family members and their support system. Address their concerns and voice your concerns in equal measure and agree which one of your concerns are the most important.
4. Try and **be consistent among all of you** on the conversations you are having with your loved one.
5. **Keep the conversation short**. Talking about too many changes at once can be overwhelming. Start with one or two topics that are you are most concerned about such as safety, medications, or nutrition.
6. Remember that this change is the most stressful for the senior. They may be **concerned about losing their independence or control**. Reassure them that you are concerned for their health and safety and not trying to take away their autonomy.
7. Be organized on your thoughts and **look for things that you agree on** even if they are not related to the topic at hand.
8. Talk about a friend who is receiving care. This can be a good introduction to the conversation and **reassure them that you will be there** with them when their time comes.



9. Do not expect to resolve your concerns with one conversation. This discussion may take several weeks or even months. **Take baby steps.**
10. **Ask questions.** See if they will be open to you about their concerns. It is common that their concerns, if they are willing to share with you, are going to be similar to yours.

Question Example: “Keeping track of all those medications must be really confusing. How do you feel about that?” **Listen carefully to their answer!**

If they agree to changes, offer to help. For example, “I can help you do that when I come visit on Saturdays.”

If they do not agree to changes:

- a. If you feel they are safe, leave it alone for a week or a month and revisit the topic later.
 - b. If you do not feel they are safe take a stronger approach - “Can I help you and we do it together next time? I want to know how this works in case you need help down the road.”
11. **Before you react** to a concern or objection from your loved one, ask another question such as **“Tell me more about that” or “What do you mean by that?”** This may help them open up and you can learn more about their underlying concerns or worries.
 12. Remember that **every person and their situation is unique**. Even if you have done this for another family member this is a new person. Do not try and put your expectations for their care on them.

If you have had this difficult conversation with your loved one and don’t know where to go next, we can help!

Call PIECES today at 970-837-1579 for more information