

APPENDIX 3: COMMUNICATION SUGGESTIONS WITH AGING ELDERS

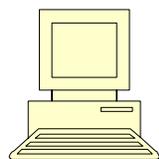
By Kathryn Kilpatrick



1. **Get to really know your loved one's hopes, wishes, fears, and concerns before you are on the verge of a crisis.** Know their story. You may have no idea that how you speak or what you are say is pushing a button for them. Listen to them with your heart. Attitude is all in the wording. Listen carefully to what you say and how you say it. **Honor their journey** and meet them where they are in the process of change.



2. Conversations and **spending time together helps** you create a bond so that they will be more comfortable having you involved in important decision-making when the time comes. Speaking infrequently, superficially or spending a few moments with them here and there and then all of a sudden having discussions about tough topics like money, car keys, or a living situation will be less well received. Develop a friendship with them. You are not their parents. It is difficult watching a loved one begin to face aging issues. Spending time with them and meeting them where they are, is the greatest gift you can give yourself and your loved ones.



3. Learn as much as you can about resources that are available. **Do your homework before having conversations about life-changing options.** This information changes on a regular basis and will change as their situation changes. Be informed and take advantage of seminars and programs that teach you more about community resources. Attend support groups. Your parent is not the only person with whom you will experience these concerns as you go through life. Each experience will allow you to handle the next one just a little better.



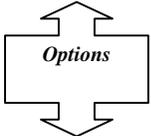
4. Do everything you can to **maximize communication** with them. If they cannot hear you well or are having trouble with vision, this may be upsetting to them, and that gets your conversation off on the wrong track. Or if their short-term memory makes it difficult for them to comprehend what you are suggesting, make necessary changes to enhance the conversation. Write down a brief explanation in addition to just talking about the situation.



5. If you note some memory issues, a complete physical and perhaps a **geriatric assessment** will put you in touch with health care professionals who can help you see the bigger picture and guide you to interventions, options and community resources.



6. Learn how to best communicate with a loved one that is experiencing **memory difficulties**. Seek professional input. Some of the helpful hints include slowing down the information presentation, taking it one item at a time, eliminating distractions and background noises or interruptions. **Writing it down for them to review later on can be helpful.**

7.  **Allow them more options** by dealing with situations early on. Involve them so that what happens becomes **THEIR** choice!

8.  Most people want to age in place and do not like change. Older adults grew up in a generation when families and caregivers were closer. You can help create this feeling of closeness by connecting them with resources that **allow them their independence while maintaining safety**. When safety becomes a concern, it is time to take things to the next level. This proactive move may both enhance the quality of those later years for them and reduce potential for a family crisis.



9. **Do not create dependency** where one does not need to exist. Do not interfere when concerns you have are more for your convenience and peace of mind. Spend time with them and enjoy their stories so that when the changes do occur, you have the kind of connection that will encourage them to turn to you for support and assistance in making choices for the next stage of their lives.



10. When difficult issues and family dissent surface, **seek professional assistance**. If you are spending all your time in conflict with the older adult or other family members, not only is that very upsetting to the older adult but your energy is being drained. This is the time to be with those you care about and to walk this journey with them.