



Family Caregiving:

Tips and Tools for You and Your Loved Ones



Starting the Care Conversation:

A Brief Guide for Potential Care Recipients

The topic of needing care from others is not always easy to talk about. People easily can feel embarrassed or concerned about a loss of personal freedom or dignity. But caregiving is about love. Think to yourself that you are starting a conversation about love, rather than about needing care, and then begin the conversation.

Family members or friends may feel awkward or uncertain about having a conversation with you that is related to providing care for your needs. They may worry about your feelings or be unsure of what you think. You can help them by starting the care conversation.

Your willingness to start this conversation can help you plan ahead, communicate your feelings and provide guidance to others about your interests and wishes related to care needs. Use the care conversation “starting points” shared here to think about how you might begin and to start your own family conversations.

Relationships and Responsibilities

On Family Relationships and Caregiving

- “I know that life would change for me and others in the family if I require significant personal care. Can I share my feelings with you about how I’d like that situation to be handled if a need arises?”
- “I would like to discuss how a caregiving situation would affect all of us as family members and see how each person feels. Do any of you have thoughts that you’d be willing to share?”

On Responsibilities and Caregiving

- “If my health becomes poor at some point, we’ll need to think about how to meet those needs and who can provide care. I have some feelings about that I’d like to share. Could you sit down and visit with me?”
- “I know we’ve discussed briefly what might happen if I ever need care. Could we visit about who and what might be involved?”

Health and Physical Issues

On Health and Caregiving

- “I know that the condition of my health needs to be considered in the future. I may develop (or already have) health-related needs that require some assistance. Can we talk about my health and what some of my feelings are on this topic?”
- “I’ve been meaning to visit with you about my personal health and any care needs that might arise in the future. What do you think about health concerns and how to handle them as they arise?”
- “I’ve been thinking that my health concerns need to be discussed specifically between us. Do you have anything about my health you’d like to know that would be helpful? Do you have thoughts about how we might deal with any concerns?”

On Physical Issues and Caregiving

- “Being able to care for myself is important, but I know that isn’t always possible with my physical limitations. Can we talk about ways to make that easier for anyone involved?”
- “I’ve heard that some different types of equipment can really help with some basic physical needs or tasks. I may need assistive technology to help with moving around, seeing or picking things up. Would you help me learn more about some of those options?”

On Advance Directives and Caregiving

- ❑ “Being able to know I have taken care of some of the important decisions that might occur if I ever need in-depth care is important to me. I’d like to explore the issues involved with putting together an advance directive if it is ever needed. Would you be willing to sit down with me and go through the process associated with completing an advance directive?”
- ❑ “If decisions ever need to be made about my health and I am unable to communicate my feelings, I’d like to have peace of mind about who is making those decisions and what has been agreed on. We need to discuss an advance directive process that would make it possible to guide decisions for my health. What are your thoughts and how do you feel about helping me put together an advance directive?”

My Care Conversation Plan

Topic(s)

- _____
- _____
- _____

Who I Plan to Visit With About My Care

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

When I Plan to Visit with Them

(Potential Date (month, etc.))

- Date: _____
- Date: _____
- Date: _____

Financial and Practical Matters

On Financial Issues and Caregiving

- ❑ “I know it’s important for me to do some planning for financial needs that might occur if I have care needs in the future. Can you help me explore some of the financial options that are available?”
- ❑ “Financially, considering what might arise in the future if I experience significant care needs is important for us. Could we discuss this as a family?”
- ❑ “We need to understand health insurance, funding for long-term care, or other financial topics related to possible care needs. Will you sit down with me to assess where I am financially right now with those issues so that we are aware of our options?”

On Living Arrangements and Caregiving

- ❑ “I know that I need to think about the best living arrangements for myself and other family members as I move into my later years. Would it be OK with you if I share some of my hopes about my living circumstances and we do some planning together?”
- ❑ “I would like to learn more about living options that exist if I ever need some extra care as I get older. Assisted living, living with family members and long-term care facilities all have different components that I need to learn more about. Can you help me get some information that we can learn about and discuss?”

Conclusion

Although we often avoid it, the experience of caregiving is common in many families and should be discussed. Starting the “care conversation” early can help in understanding feelings, developing plans and making decisions that will be helpful if a need arises. Take the time to think about it and start the care conversation in your family.

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