

How to Talk to Your Loved Ones About Moving

Speaking with parents or loved ones about their future living arrangements may not be easy. It can feel uncomfortable to start looking after the people who once took care of you. Many people don't want to consider moving until pushed by changing life circumstances – whether an illness, the loss of a spouse, or the demands of home maintenance. Regardless of the motivation, talking to your loved ones about a move requires a certain level of sensitivity.

Here are a few thoughts to help your loved ones better understand the benefits of a move.

The Earlier, the Better

What's the first thing many older adults say when asked if they're interested in moving to a retirement community? "I'm not ready yet!" And what's the most common thing they say once they move to a community? "I wish I'd done this 10 years ago!"

So start your discussions early. Use anecdotes or personal events as a catalyst for discussion. Even if your parents say they "aren't ready yet," opening the lines of communication will plant a seed and lay the groundwork for future discussions.

Be Positive

Answer their concerns with positives. If they say they aren't ready to downsize, explain that a smaller residence will give them the freedom to focus on doing things they want to do instead of things they have to. Home repairs and housework will be things of the past. A whole new array of interesting pastimes and new friends will await. Wellness programs will keep them at their best. Trips to shopping destinations and restaurants will be everyday events.

Encourage them to make a decision when they have the power to determine their future – and enjoy all the amenities a community might offer. By waiting, they limit their options – and risk leaving the decision to someone else.

Explain, Don't Tell

Help your loved ones understand the differences between various retirement living options, including a Continuing Care Retirement Community like Friendship Village. Share your concerns about their future, but don't tell them this is what they should do. It is ultimately their decision, and pressuring them is not likely to yield good results.

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Back It Up with Information

Don't just tell your loved ones they should consider moving, show them how it can benefit them. Do your research. What kind of community would best suit their preferences – and pocketbooks? Would they prefer a community grounded in a religious tradition? A brand new community or an established one with a good reputation? What best suits their financial goals – a refundable entrance fee, a rental arrangement, or a life-care plan? Check out the amenities, the contracts and the promise of care. If a Continuing Care Retirement Community is an option, look for one that's accredited by the Continuing Care Accreditation Commission.

Some communities – like Friendship Village – may guarantee your parents a home for life and discounts on care services, while others are pay-as-you-go. Some include access to different levels of care, while others may require your loved ones to move elsewhere if they ever need additional help. There's a lot to learn, and you can help them make sense of all the choices. Call the communities you want to explore for a tour and request a brochure. Check out their Web sites to learn more. You can tell a lot about an organization by how it presents itself.

Regroup and Reevaluate

If your loved ones are adamantly opposed to even exploring a move, agree to disagree. Then review your approach. Would the idea of moving be more palatable coming from someone else? Consider talking to one of their trusted friends or advisors about your concerns. Perhaps the friend could invite your loved ones to accompany her when she visits a community. Or, maybe the advisor could help your loved ones understand the financial or lifestyle benefits of making a move. Another possibility: Ask a Residency Counselor at a community to invite your loved ones to lunch and a tour at the community. Most will be more than happy to perform this service for you.

Respect Their Decision

Your loved ones could choose to move right away, or they may never agree unless circumstances force them into change. Regardless, it's important to respect their decision. Your relationship with your loved ones is more important than being right. Another opportunity for discussion could be right around the corner.

