

Having The Conversation About Senior Living

A move into senior living represents a significant life change. As with any transition in life, it can come with a variety of emotions: excitement, nervousness, anxiety – everyone reacts in their own way. While everyone handles change differently, there are common threads that run through the process of considering senior living. Within this resource guide, we examine common themes we've found that families deal with as part of those conversations.

I think it's time to talk to a loved one about assisted living.

How do we start that conversation?

The conversation about assisted living can be fraught and emotional, and it's important that it be handled with compassion.

First, make sure any siblings or other family members involved in the decision are aware of the conversation, and are on board. It's best not to have the conversation until every key member of the family involved in the decision is on the same page.

Having said that, the intent isn't to "gang up" on your loved one, but instead reassure them that for their own comfort and safety, senior living provides all the amenities and care options they need to live a productive, fulfilling life. There's also an active social life waiting for them, with fellow residents always eager to meet new people.

It's important to have done your research in advance to be able to address concerns and come into the conversation prepared.

What happens if my loved one gets angry or upset?

If your loved one is taken by surprise, anger or hurt feelings are a possibility. Many seniors associate assisted living with a loss of independence, and it can be very difficult to ponder the idea that they might lose that.

It's entirely possible that the decision won't be made over the course of one conversation. It's an important decision that requires a lot of thought and consideration. If your loved one is upset by the conversation, then by all means allow them time and space to process their feelings. However, if you are concerned about their safety and their ability to care for themselves at home, those concerns don't go away. Even if your loved one needs time, gently follow up with them and find out how they're feeling.

The process needs to be collaborative, not ordered. To that end, the first step is often to book a tour so your loved one can get a first-hand idea of what life is like in a senior living community.

Does a move into senior living mean sacrificing independence?

Prestige can actually help in that regard. Perhaps you or a loved one has had to give up driving due to health or vision deterioration. With Prestige, residents have access to a bus to help take them shopping or to appointments.

From a dining standpoint, buying groceries, cooking and clean-up are no longer a concern as residents enjoy restaurant-quality meals three times a day. And the social bonds formed with other residents helps provide options for fun outings you or a loved one may not be able to take right now.



I'm a senior considering assisted living, but I'm not sure how my family will feel about it – how do I approach it with them?

In many cases, seniors themselves are the ones who decide it's time for assisted living and initiate the conversation with their families.

It's important to be honest: if you're concerned about your ability to care for yourself, if you're finding day-to-day tasks to be more difficult, or if you're in need of a more active social life, let your loved ones know why you're feeling the way you are. They may not be aware of your feelings, and open dialogue can make the process easier.

Can I afford senior living?

Like any significant financial commitment, it's important to understand your budget. Of course, whereas now you may be paying separately for a wide variety of utilities and services, most of those are bundled into one cost in senior living.

Visit our resource guide on the financial commitment that comes with senior living for more information.

How do I, or my loved one, know if independent or assisted living is the appropriate level of senior living?

Independent living and assisted living are two different levels of care – independent living residents can still mostly accomplish day-to-day tasks and are enticed by the idea of less responsibility in terms of cooking, cleaning and other household chores. Assisted living residents may need help with things like dressing, bathing, toileting, etc.

To get a better sense of which level of care may be right for you or a loved one, visit our resource guide on that subject for more.

My loved one is skeptical about senior living – how do we help them overcome their objections?

The first thing to do is listen to them with intent. A move to senior living is a significant life change, and as with people at any age facing a new phase of life, there is often fear and anxiety that accompanies it. And while everyone is different and may have their own reasons for not wanting to move to a senior living community, there are a few topics we've found to be common, and reasons why senior living can be a good idea:

Independence: Many people associate senior living with a loss of independence, however, many seniors have already had to stop driving and maybe aren't as active as they used to be, and thus maybe don't leave their home very often. But with senior living, there are always people around to socialize with, and transportation that can take you where you need to go.

Cost: While cost can be a factor, our resource guide on finances and senior living can help you and your loved plan the financial aspect of a move. Considering how many costs are rolled into our monthly rent versus paying them all separately now, the difference isn't as wide as you may think.

"I'm not ready for senior living": If you're looking into senior living for a loved one – you have your reasons why. Maybe they're struggling with day-to-day tasks, maybe they're socially isolated, but in any event, you need to be honest with your loved one as to why you think it's a good idea to at least consider it.

You can discuss aspects such as the maintenance and upkeep of a home that becomes more difficult and expensive, the safety that comes with senior living, or a frank conversation about making the move before an accident or incident that will force the issue.

"There isn't enough room for all my belongings": That's likely true, there won't be. But downsizing doesn't have to be a bad thing. It can bring into focus what really matters for a senior – and there is plenty of room for family photos, scrapbooks, heirlooms and other meaningful items.

