



Communicating With Your Aging Parents

Let's begin by saying it's not easy. The question we ask ourselves is this: why can't they see the problems they face the same way that we do? The short answer is that they don't always associate aging with a reversal or modification of roles, and many elderly parents are not willing to give their adult children control over their decisions and lives.

The way you communicate counts for a lot in these situations.

Some of the best communication techniques you can use include the following:

- Listen to what your parents say and try to understand what's important to them.
- Don't rush the conversation or create a "fire drill." Pushing too soon will cause rejection.
- Pose questions and offer more than one acceptable solution.
- Ask your parents which choice they think is best. By doing this you give them some control.
- Be patient. Talking with your parents isn't a race or a contest of wills to see who wins.
- It's a series of communication where both parties feel benefited from the outcome.

The shifting of control and responsibilities from your parents is a slow, subtle, ongoing process that must be done with great sensitivity and tact—that's the graceful ability to step on someone's toes in such a way that it doesn't ruin the shine. Some days, conversations are positive and productive. At other times, little is accomplished. Remember, things change. New information can make a difference. Throughout the process, it is important to keep the channels of communication open so that ongoing discussion is possible. What matters most is that we are able to stay in touch and stay involved in the lives of those we love.

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